LOVE'S CLIMAX
NO. 2394

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 6, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 10, 1887.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
1 John 4:10.

To find love, you have need send a lover—one whose soul is full of love is the most likely to discover it. John, with love in his heart, soars aloft and, using his eagle eyes, looks over all history and all space and, at last, he poises himself over one spot, for he has found that for which he was looking, and says, "Herein is love." There is love in a thousand places, like the scattered drops of spray on the leaves of the forest, but as for the ocean, that is in one place, and when we reach it, we say, "Herein is water." There is love in many places, like wandering beams of light, but as for the sun, it is in one part of the heavens and as we look at it, we say, "Herein is light." So, "Herein," said the Apostle, as he looked toward the Lord Jehovah, Himself, "Herein is love." He did not point to his own heart and say, "Herein is love," for that was but a little pool filled from the great sea of love. He did not look at the Church of God and say of all the myriads who counted not their lives dear unto them, "Herein is love," for their love was only the *reflected brightness* of the great sun of love! No, he looked to God the Father, in the splendor of His condescension in giving His only Son to die for us, and he said "Herein is love," as if all love were here—love at its utmost height, love at its climax, love out-doing itself—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I have no time for an elaborate discourse and I have no desire to preach in such a fashion, but I do want to get at your hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. There seem to me to be four things in the text, each of which tends to bring out the greatness of Divine Love. First, here is *love to the loveless*—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." Secondly, here is *love to the sinful*—"God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Thirdly, here is *love providing a propitiation*, not passing by sin without atonement, but making a propitiation for sin. And, lastly, here is love surrendering the Only-Begotten—"God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I. First, then, dear Friends, that we may see the love of God in its fullness, I invite you to think of His LOVE TO THE LOVELESS—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

Now, *if man had loved God, God need not have loved man.* If all of us from our earliest childhood had loved our God, it would have somewhat

lessened the wonder that He should love us. I can understand that we should marvel at God's loving us, even if we had always loved Him, for we are so insignificant that what little love we can give to Him can never deserve that He should fix His heart of love upon us. If an ant were in love with an angel, it would not, therefore, follow that the angel ought to be in love with the ant, yet there is no difference between an ant and an angel compared with the difference between us and God! We are *nothing* and He is All in All!

Yet I admit that if, from our youth up we had always loved God, it would not have seemed so extraordinary a thing, knowing what we do of God, that He should have loved us, but this is the startling word in our text—"Not that we loved God." There is a negative put there and the positive assertion is that *God did love us*, even though there is also the negative that *we did not love Him*. It is very easy for us to love those who love us. It is hard, sometimes, to love those who do *not* love us, especially if they are under great obligation to us—and I am sure that was our case with regard to God. We were deeply in debt to Him and we ought to have loved Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength—but we did nothing of the kind! Yet, notwithstanding all that, He loved us. While we were His *enemies*, He loved us and sent His Son to save us.

Furthermore, let me remark that, *when man does love God, it is no very great wonder*. If you and I love God—and I hope that we do—if we love Him with all the fervor of which our hearts are capable, is there anything, after all, very extraordinary in such affection? Why, Brothers and Sisters, *not* to love the Lord our God is detestable! To love Him is, in one sense, commendable, but it can never be considered meritorious! Who can help loving a kind father who has cared for him all his days? Who can help loving one who has saved him from death? Who can help loving one who has laid down his life for him? Surely, if we are in a right state of heart, we cannot help loving God because He first loved us. When we do love Him, it is not at all wonderful—it would be little enough return for the great love wherewith He has loved us if we gave to Him all the love that we can ever bestow upon anyone—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small!
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!"

And, if God's love gets all that it demands, it is even then but a *poor return* that we have made for love so magnificent as His!

But, Beloved, I have been only supposing something which is not true, for I have been supposing that we loved God. The fact is otherwise, according to the text, for the Apostle says, "Not that we loved God." Let us think a little of that terrible fact! I do not want to preach to you, but I do wish you to preach to yourselves, or rather, that the Holy Spirit may preach to you from this passage—"Not that we loved God." For many a year we were indifferent to God. He came across our path in many ways, but we did not want to see Him, or to hear about Him. Some of us were favored by godly training, yet we did our best to miss the blessing of it. We tried, as men say, to "sow our wild oats." We did not care to do what

God would have us do—we were totally indifferent to His claims! Yet now, with tears in our eyes, we can truthfully say that, "He loved us." We know that the Lord loved us even when we were indifferent to Him!

Worse than that, there were some who were even insulting to God. I mean that they spoke ill words about Him and about His Grace, His day, His people, His cause, His Word. Some spoke exceedingly proud and exalted themselves against the Lord—yet He loved them. Oh, how it wrings the heart of a penitent sinner to think that God loved him when he was a blasphemer, loved him when he imprecated a curse upon himself, loved him when God, Himself, could not see anything in him that was lovable! Loved him when there was not a spot of merit as big as a pin's head upon which love could have rested if it had needed to rest on merit at all! Oh, wonder of wonders! "Herein is love, not that we loved God," but that we were indifferent to Him and some even insulting to Him!

And oh, *what rebellion against God there was in some of our hearts*! How we kicked and struggled against the idea of yielding to Him! Are there not numbers of you who never think of God at all? You go to your daily work, or to your business and God is not at all in your thoughts! If there were no God, it would make no difference to some of you, except that you would feel a little more comfortable and you would then be glad that there would be no Judgment Day. But, O Sirs, this is a sad, a *miserable* state to be in! If there were no hereafter and I had to die like a dog, I would choose to love my God, for I find a peace, a strength, a joy in it that makes life worth living! There is nothing here on earth that is worth a man's pursuit except his God! If he once knew the love of God, life would wear sunbeams about it—but apart from that it is a drudgery! To the unbeliever, existence in this world is a horrible slavery.

But, Brothers and Sisters, it is very wonderful that God should love us when we try our hardest to be rid of Him, when we are at enmity against Him, when we are opposed, even, to His love, and will not listen to the Gospel of His Grace! Yet so He did—He loved us even in this condition! Perhaps some of you do not feel that there is anything very remarkable in this love of the Lord to the loveless. I should like you to try, if you could, love somebody who has nothing about him that is at all lovable. I hope, dear Christian people, that you do this, but if you learn to love the wicked, the ungodly, the injurious, the deceivers—if you even love those who vilify you, those who slander you every day, those who despise you and deride you and those who are ungrateful to you—if you do this, then you will get into some sort of sympathy with God and you will begin to understand a little of what His great love must be!

But there are some men who will never know what such an experience as that is until God's Grace renews them, for if anybody says half a word against them, their fist is soon in his eye! If anyone does them the slightest injury, they will remember it and resent it as long as they live! Yes, and I am afraid that there are some who call themselves Christians who are of this spirit, and will not forgive. I heard of a man who was driving an omnibus and who was beating one of the horses, but he never hit the other. Someone on the box said to him, "Why don't you whip the other

horse?" "Oh," he answered, "I never touch *him*, for if I did, when I put him up at night, he would kick me like a Christian." When I heard that, I supposed that there must be some so-called Christians who know how to kick when they get a cut of the whip—and I am afraid that there are. But, if you can forgive to 70 times seven and still continue to forgive, even *then* you have only done what you *ought* to do, for this is what the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to do—and this is what God did, though He was under no obligation to do anything of the kind! Instead of bearing any resentment, He was full of Almighty Love. And there are some here, tonight, who, as they remember the years in which they lived without loving God, must feel that, "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

II. But now, secondly, it greatly enhances the love of God that it is LOVE TO THE SINFUL.

Remember that *all sins are offenses against God*. Yet it is clear from our text that the Lord loves those who have offended Him. There are multitudes who have lived a life full of opposition to God, yet He has loved them all the while and saved them after all!

Remember, too, that *God has a very keen appreciation of what sin is*. It shocks Him, it disgusts Him—He cannot bear it. He calls it, "this abominable thing which I hate." You and I are often callous to sin, but God abhors it. His holy soul is stirred to indignation against it. Yet, notwithstanding that—

"God loved the world of sinners lost
And ruined by the Fall"

and sent His Son into the world to deliver men from sin, the sin which He loathed and hated, for He determined to save them from the sin, itself, and from all its terrible results! Well might the hymn-writer I just quoted go on to sing—

"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
The love of God to me!
It brought my Savior from above,
To die on Calvary."

Do not forget, also, that *many sins are committed specially against God's Love*. That is to say, there are some who even dare to sin the more because God is merciful! There are, no doubt, many who have become hardened in their lives of sin—though it is a shocking thing that it should be so—by the very fact that they believe God is ready to forgive them. If such is the condition of your hearts, my Hearers, let me assure you that it has also been the case with many others and yet, notwithstanding such an enormity of guilt, they have been saved from their sins. Verily, "herein is love."

In the case of some persons, *these sins have been persisted in and aggravated*. There are many whom God has loved with an everlasting love and whom Christ has redeemed with His precious blood, who have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years up to their necks in sin—and that against light and knowledge! Some have gone on sinning with a high hand more and more, yet Almighty Love has come in and saved even them! Never let it be thought that any sinner is beyond the reach of

Divine Mercy so long as he is in the land of the living. I stand here to preach illimitable love, unbounded Grace to the vilest of the vile, to those who have nothing in them that can deserve consideration from God—men who ought to be swept into the bottomless pit at once if Justice meted out to them their just deserts! Even such sinners as these, in multitudes of instances, have been washed and made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ! "Herein is love."

I do not see how God ever could have shown His love to the same extent as it is now displayed if there had never been any sin in the world. I would not dare to say, as Augustine boldly did concerning Adam's sin, "*Beata culpa*!"—"Happy fault!"—because it gave an opportunity for Divine Love to prove itself to an extraordinary degree! But I will say this—if God had made ten thousand worlds and lit them up with all His wisdom and power, I do not see how He could have manifested His matchless love, even then, as He displays it now in the fact that He has loved sinful men and women—and loved them so as to make them His sons and daughters and bring them to dwell with Him at His right hand through Jesus Christ His Son!—

"He gave His Son, His only Son,
To ransom rebel worms!
'Tis here He makes His goodness known
In its most Divine forms."

I have spoken to you, therefore, of two things that enhance God's love—love to the loveless, and love to the sinful. I wish that some poor soul could creep in through the door of God's Mercy to which I have pointed and get a part and lot in these precious matters!

III. But now, thirdly, one of the things that make God's love seem very wonderful is that it is LOVE PROVIDING A PROPITIATION.

I have heard it asked, "Why did not God just wipe out human sin, and say to the guilty, 'There, there, you have done wrong, but I have forgiven you'"? Now, if He had done that, what inference would you have drawn from such action on His part? Certainly you would not have been able to say, "Herein is love," in the sense in which you can now say it.

If the Lord had thus passed by sin, *sin would have seemed little, and Divine Love little*. Many would have said, "Oh, well, sin was nothing very great after all. It was an offense against God—He blotted it out—and there is an end of it!" Is not everybody here quite certain that we would have spoken like that? We would have concluded that sin was a very trivial matter, nothing to worry about, or God would not have passed it by so readily. But, look—it was such an awful evil that *He could not pass it by*. In His Wisdom, whose judgment is Infallible, sin was not pardonable except through a propitiatory Sacrifice! It was not possible that offenses against The Divine Majesty should be wiped out without expiation! God was the best judge of that question and now, when He says, "There must be a propitiation, but I will provide it; there must be an Atonement, but I will arrange it"—"Herein is love"—love seen at a greater height than it could have been seen in any other way!

Besides, dear Friends, by any other method of removing sin, *love would not have been seen so majestic over all other attributes*. Suppose

that the Lord had simply said, "Well, though these people have offended, I forgive them and there is an end of the quarrel"? Then there could not have been exhibited that wondrous sight which we now see! In the death of Christ, the Great Propitiation, we see Divine Wisdom planning the way, exercising itself to the fullest to devise a method by which God might be just and yet, "the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." Then we see Divine Justice coming in fully satisfied by the death of Christ and bowing a glad assent to the pardon of the sinner—who is as justly forgiven as he would, on the other hand, have been righteously punished! In the vicarious Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see all the attributes of God sitting at the feet of Love—all looking up and saying to Love—"We will do your bidding, we will, all of us, co-act and co-work till the whole Godhead shall be seen exerting its Omniscience and putting forth its Omnipotence, in order that there might be a propitiation for sin." "Herein is love."

Again, I do not see, dear Friends, if God had pardoned us without expiation, how we ever could have *felt the security of love that we now feel*. I feel at this moment—I do not know how every Believer, here, feels— but I feel that I am absolutely safe! I am a sinner, but there is no reason on earth, or under the earth, or in Heaven, itself, why I should be sent to Hell. My sin has been forgiven me, but, what is much more than that, my Lord Jesus Christ has made such a complete Atonement for all my guilt that *it does not even exist as a charge against me*! The debt is paid and the receipt is nailed to His cross—and this gives me such a perfect peace, such an absolute rest—I do not think I could have had if I had merely read in the Scriptures that God had passed by the sin without a propitiation! He has not passed by the sin—He has exacted the full penalty for it! And the penalty having been paid, the Atonement having been offered, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Our dead sins are buried! Christ, Himself, has put them away, and they can never rise against us in judgment any more. Looking up to our Lord, we can say, with Toplady—

"Complete Atonement You have made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whatever Your people owed!
Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your righteousness,
And sprinkled with Your blood."

And once more, *the stoop of love could never have seemed so great without expiation,* for, see, if God had pardoned sin without Atonement, He would have sat in the serene majesty of Heaven and we would have thought that sin was a trifling thing, altogether beneath His notice! But now, He that made all things and by whom all things consist, takes off the robes of His splendor and comes down to earth! What can He be going to do? Blessed spirits, who have waited around His Throne for ages, what is He doing? He is going to the earth to unite the nature of fallen humanity with His own perfect Deity! He that is God is also to be Man! What a wonder! What a marvel! But there is something more extraordinary to follow—being found in fashion as a Man, the time comes when

man's sin is *laid upon Him*! What? did He bear *sin*? Listen—"Who His own self"—that is, Christ, whom angels worship, the Incarnate Wisdom, without whom was not anything made that was made—"who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "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."

Why, do you know, sometimes, when I am thinking over this wondrous stoop of love, I wish that I could jump into this pulpit, directly, and tell you what I feel about it? Sometimes, at the dead of night, I sit up in bed, lost in wonder at the amazing Love of God in the gift of His dear Son! That I should commit a sin and that God, Himself, should bear its punishment! That my guilt should make a propitiation, necessary—and that the Divine Son of God should suffer in my place! That the necessary expiation should be made—this is surely the greatest wonder of earth or Heaven! It is the greatest marvel that ever shall be, that He, who is God over all, blessed forever, yet stoops so low as this! I can understand His stooping to poverty and being a carpenter. I can understand His stooping to hunger and to thirst. I can understand His stooping even to death—but *that He should bear our sins*—this is the greatest stoop of all! "Herein is love." O blessed Lord Jesus, how must You have loved us when You did not disdain to bear even the enormous burden of our sin! Oh, that these lips had language that I could tell this old, old story as my heart often tells it to herself! But I must leave each one of you to think it over, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, till you, also, feel, "Herein is love,"

IV. The last thing on which I am to speak at this time is LOVE SURRENDERING THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN.

I have shown you wherein God's Love excels all other loves—it is love to the loveless, love to the sinful, love providing a propitiation. Now here is the climax of the love of God in giving up His only-begotten Son—"He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

You do not need for me to say much about this part of our subject. Will you kindly recall the story of Abraham and his son Isaac going to the mount in the land of Moriah? Put the Lord God and His well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the place of the Patriarch and his son, and you can see the picture of the Atonement drawn to the life before your eyes. You remember how the Lord said to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of."

Jesus was God's Son, His only-begotten Son, whom He loved more than any of you can ever love your sons or daughters, for the love of God towards Him is ineffable, immeasurable! It is not possible for me to tell you how much God loved His Son. But that Son who had always given Him delight, in whom He was well-pleased—that Son must endure shame, agony and *death* if sinners were ever to be saved! How could the Father give up His Son for such a purpose? I have sometimes felt as if I could almost rush in, and say, "No! It must not be! The price is too great to be paid for the rescue of such worthless worms as we are!" Yet, to ran-

som any one of us, the Son of God must be sacrificed and sacrificed, as it were, by His Father, for thus is it written, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." Thus, there is one point of resemblance between the offering of Isaac and the propitiatory Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ—it was the Father who had to offer up His son whom He loved so dearly. But there are many more similarities between these two offerings.

In the 22nd chapter of the Book of Genesis, we read that, "Abraham rose up early in the morning." God also rose early to make this great propitiation for our sins. In the Everlasting Covenant, before the earth was, He ordained the Sacrifice which should tear His heart. God Himself had done as Abraham did when he cut the wood for the burnt offering, that is, the Lord prepared everything for the coming, the life and the death of His Son. All that went before in the arrangements of Providence was like the chopping of the wood and the laying of it in order—even from eternity the great Father contemplated the Sacrifice on Calvary and went on with all that was necessary for its completion.

Then there was the lifting of the sacrificial knife—"Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." That lifting of the knife in the case of Jesus was, first, when in Gethsemane's garden, the Father permitted His Son to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. And next, when on the Cross He allowed Him to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was the knife for the sacrificing of the Son. Then came the crushing of our Redeemer's soul beneath the mass of human sin. The great upper and nether millstones of Almighty Wrath pressed and bruised the heart of the Son of God! Omnipotence put forth all its power to deal out the vengeance due to sin! It cried to Justice to be stern, sterner than ever—"Awake, O sword." Not, "Let Me use the sword," but, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts." And into the very dust of death the well-beloved Son of God was crushed!

Remember, also, that touching little sentence about Abraham and Isaac—"They went both of them together." This was true of Jesus and His Father—Jesus a willing Sacrifice—and God as willingly surrendering His dear Son for our sakes. Never forget the Father's love in giving up His Son! It used to be laid down in theology that God "has no feeling, neither parts nor passions." Others may worship a dead, unfeeling God, if they will, but I do not! The God whom I worship can feel far more than any of His creatures can! And what He felt when He gave up His Son to die, it is not for human lips to tell. This is among the things which it were unlawful and impossible for a man to utter. Just what you would have felt if you had given your only son. Just what you would have felt if you had been Abraham and you had offered up your beloved Isaac. Just that—*multiplied by infinity*—did the Eternal Father feel when He gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins! "Herein is love." Rightly did we sing just now—

"O love of God, how strong and true!
Eternal, and yet always new,
Uncomprehended and unbought,

Beyond all knowledge and all thought.
We read You best in Him who came
To bear for us the Cross of shame;
Sent by the Father from on high,
Our life to live, our death to die."

When you get home, sit down, say nothing to anybody, but just try, if you can, to realize that God actually did give up His only-begotten Son that you might live through Him, if you are a Believer in that dear Son of God and you live through Him! If He bore your griefs and carried your sorrows. If He was wounded for your transgressions and bruised for your iniquities. If He put away all your sins, then fall down at His dear feet and weep yourself away. No, rise and sing yourself away! And when you have done that, come back, again, and go forth to work for Him with all your might—and try to love your fellow men at something like the rate at which God loved you! You will never reach that climax of love, but aim at getting as near to it as you can—and God bless you in the effort!

It seems to me so sad that there should be anybody in the world who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And very sad that there should be any poor sinner, here, who does not lay hold on eternal life as it is set forth in the Gospel. You self-righteous people, you who never did any wrong, I do not expect you to take any notice of this discourse—you are so wretchedly wrapped up in yourselves that you care nothing for my blessed Master! You are like the self-made man, of whom I have heard, who used to adore his own maker—his maker being himself.

But you who are poor and needy, burdened with sin and full of guilt, this is the God for you! This is the Christ for you! Come and have Him, come and trust Him and then sing with all of us who have believed in 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!"

May His blessing rest on you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 4; PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9.

1 John 4:1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* If John had need to say that in the early morning of Christianity, I am sure we ought to say it with greater emphasis today! It is certainly true in these days that, "many false prophets are gone out into the world." Therefore we, also, must, "try the spirits whether they are of God."

2. *Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* If the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ is denied, as it was by the first heretics, we may conclude that the Spirit of God is not in such teaching. Any doctrine which dishonors Christ—whether in His Person, or His offices, or His Atonement, or in any other way—you may at once conclude is not of God, for that which comes from the Spirit of God glorifies Christ. Did not our Lord, Himself, say, concerning the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you"?

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, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* The devil is up early at his evil work! We may sleep, but he never does. This is that spirit of antichrist, whereof, "you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

4. *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them.* How? By argument? No, but—

4. *Because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* If God's own Spirit is in you, you need not fear any of these enemies. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." If it were a conflict between you and others who had the Spirit of God within them, the conflict would be grievous and the issue of it would be doubtful. But now that the struggle is between the Spirit of God who is in you and the spirit of error that is in the world, you need have no question about the ultimate result of the battle!

5, 6. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* If Apostolic teaching is denied, those who deny it are not of God, for the Spirit of God was in the Apostles, as He is also in all the Lord's true children. By this test we may try many of the spirits of the present day—"He that knows God hears us; He that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The Apostle now gives us another Infallible test by which we may "try the spirits."

7, 8. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love.* Where there is the spirit of enmity, of envy, of pride, of contention, there is not the Spirit of God! That which makes towards love, we may depend upon it—it came forth from love! But that which makes towards division, contention, emulation and strife, is not of God, "for God is Love."

9-12. *In this was manifested the Love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that some 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. 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.* We cannot see God, but we can *love* God, and love, therefore, takes the place of eyes to us. When we love God, it is because He dwells in us! That is better than seeing Him—to have Him resident within our spirit, although He is not discernible by these mortal eyes!

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 do 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. God is Love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.* These words are very sim-

ple, but the lesson they convey is a very deep one. Most of them are monosyllables, but, oh, what marvels of meaning the Holy Spirit enabled the Apostle John to put into them!

17, 18. *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 out fear: because fear has torment.* That is a *servile* fear, of course, but there is a fear which has no torment in it—that holy fear which even angels feel when they veil their faces in the Presence of the Most high. There is no torment in that reverent awe and, the more we have of love towards God, the more of that filial fear shall we have! But that slavish dread, that awful terror which begets within itself dislike, cannot live where true love is planted within the soul—

"Perfect love casts out fear."

18-20. *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: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?* God looked upon us with an eye that saw all our sin and misery, yet He loved us, and He wants us to have a love which, while it sees all the imperfection and all the faults in our fellow men, yet loves them notwithstanding all. If we do not love those whom we see, the Apostle says that we do but lie when we talk of loving God whom we have not seen.

21. *And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God love his brother, also.* Now let us read what another Apostle has to say, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, upon this subject of Christian love. Turn to Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, the fourth chapter.

Philippians 4:1. *Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.* It is a great joy to a minister, as it was to the Apostle Paul, to have converts. But that joy is greatly diminished when they do not stand fast—then, indeed, every supposed joy becomes a sorrow and, instead of the roses which yield a sweet perfume to the Lord's servant—thorns begin to prick and wound his heart.

2. *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.* Only two women and we do not know who they were, yet Paul gives each of them a, "beseech"—"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." If there are only two of the most obscure Sisters in the Church who are quarrelling, their differences ought to be brought to an end at once. There should be no disagreements among Christians! Love should reign, peace should predominate. If there is anything contrary to such a state as that, God grant that it may soon be brought to an end!

3. *And I entreat you, also, true yoke fellow, 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.* Brother, do all the good you can to help everybody else to do good! Help those whose names are in the Book of Life, even if they are not known anywhere else. Also help the "Clement" whose name is known—be sure to help him. Indeed, help everybody! There is an office in the Church of Christ which we do

not sufficiently recognize, but which ought to be abundantly filled. Paul mentions it in writing to the Corinthians. He says, "And God has set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." It is the office of certain Christians to be "helps." May we always have many such "helps" among us! Did you ever notice that almost every time that Bartholomew is mentioned in Scripture, we read, "and Bartholomew"? He is never spoken of alone, but it is written, "Philip, and Bartholomew," or, "Bartholomew and Matthew." It is good to have some Bartholomews who are always helping somebody else, so that when there is any good work to be done, Bartholomew is always ready to share in it, for he shall also have a part in the reward at the last.

4. *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.* The very word, "rejoice," seems to imply a reduplication. It is joy, and re-joy, joy over again! But here, you see, it is a *fourfold* rejoicing; joy, and re-joy; and again I say, joy, and re-joy! And this is to be the Christian's continual experience, for the Apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*."

5, 6. *Let your moderation be known unto all men. 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.* Have no care, but much prayer. Prayer is the cure for care! If you are in trouble, "Let your requests be made known," not to your neighbors, but, "unto God."

7, 8. *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.* Be on the side of everything that is good and right, everything that helps true human progress, everything that increases virtue and purity. As a Christian, take an interest in everything that helps to make men true, honest, just, pure, and lovely.

9. *Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.* May the Lord fulfill that gracious Word to all of us, "The God of peace shall be with you"! 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.

THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP
NO. 2395

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 13, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 3, 1887.

"Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican."
Luke 18:10.

THIS is called a parable, yet it is rather an incident, an anecdote, a statement of facts. You will observe that our Lord never used a fable. Fables may be employed to set forth that which is earth-born, but a *parable*, which is, in itself, true, is alone adapted to set forth spiritual Truths of God. I say this just now because I read, the other day, an assertion that the story of the rich man and Lazarus was only a fable, like that of Jotham. But the most of our Lord's parables are not only parables, but literal facts—and all of them might be facts. I would almost go the length of saying that all of them *have been* actual facts and in this case there is nothing parabolic at all. It is the statement of an incident which did literally occur, for truth is best illustrated by truth and, as Christ had nothing to teach but what was pure Truth, He illustrated it by Truth and never went into the realm of fiction, or invented a tale, or told a story which was not a fact, much less did He ever teach by a mere fable!

There were two men who went into the Temple to pray. They prayed in just the way that our Lord describes and they went away, the one justified, and the other without a blessing. I am not going into the full teaching of the parable on this occasion, but I want to make a few observations concerning public worship in the Lord's House. Commencing to preach, again, on Thursday nights, after my season of rest, I thought that this sermon should be a sort of preface or introduction to our gatherings for prayer, praise, preaching and hearing the Word. God grant us a blessing in beginning, again, this holy employment. And may we be in health and strength and spiritual vigor, and be of some use to the people of God!

I. Commencing, then, I would say, first, that IT IS WELL TO WORSHIP GOD IN PUBLIC—"Two men went up into the Temple to pray."

It is good to pray anywhere. He that does not pray in his closet is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray in the Temple. But, though we pray in the closet—though we get into such a habit of prayer and are so full of the spirit of prayer that we can pray anywhere—it is well to go and mingle with others and openly worship God who delights to be thus wor-

shipped. It was written very early in the history of our race, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." It has been the custom of the godly to meet for worship in all times. The sheep of Christ are gregarious—this is their nature, they love to gather themselves into congregations, to feed in the same pasture—and to enjoy, together, the Presence of their great Shepherd. It will always be so. The more pious and godly men are, alone, the more will they love associated worship. If it should ever happily come to pass that each feeble one among us should be as David, and every David should be as the angel of the Lord, yet even *then* we would find strength and help in our service for God by meeting together for united worship. The Apostolic command is, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." Public worship is not everything—if there were no private worship, it would be nothing by itself. To go up to the Temple is not everything. The man who does not meet God *outside* the Temple will not meet God *inside* the Temple, he may rest assured of that.

Yet, it is well, it is desirable that it should be said of us as it was said of the men mentioned in our text, "Two men went up into the Temple to pray." For public worship is, first of all, *an open avowal of our faith in God and of our belief in prayer.* If we pray in private, nobody knows it. At least nobody *should* know it, for our Lord's direction is very plain, "You, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly." Our acts of personal devotion must be sacred to God and our own souls, but when we go up to the public assembly—whether it is but of two or three, or of many thousands, it matters not—there is, to that extent, an *open declaration* that we believe in God, that, let others do as they may, as for us, we worship Him, we believe in the reality and power and usefulness of prayer and, therefore, in the light of day, before all men, we gather ourselves together to pray! I thank God that there are, in this unbelieving London, so many thousands of assemblies of worshipping people—a public testimony constantly borne to the fact that we do believe in God and that we do believe in prayer!

Public worship is also, in the next place, *a good way of securing unity in prayer.* A number of persons may agree to pray about one thing, yet they may never see each other's faces—their prayers may blend at the Mercy Seat, but they must lack an emphatic consciousness of unity such as we have who come together to pray. Our Lord Jesus promised His special Presence to the united gatherings of His people when He said. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Oh, dear Friends, what should we do if we were not able to come together to mingle our sighs and cries and tears and, better still, to blend our joys, our Psalms, our shouts of victory? As we are members of one mystical body, it is but right that we should, as members of that

one body, worship together, lifting up the joyous song in tuneful harmony and blending our supplications!—

"Around our common Mercy Seat."

I think, also, that public worship is *a great means of quickening.* At any rate, it is so to me. I never feel that I can pray as well as when I am in the midst of my own dear friends and, oftentimes, when things are flagging within the soul, to get together with brighter spirits, in whom the life of God is more vigorous, is a great help to me. It does not seem so very long ago—although these spectacles and my many gray hairs tell me that it must have been long since— that I used to say to my mother that hymn which begins—

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
A whole assembly worship Thee!
At once they sing, at once they pray;
They hear of Heaven, and learn the Way."

Dr. Watts put it very well and I can utter the same sentiment—

"Lord how delightful 'tis to see
This vast assembly worship Thee!"

when the house is full from floor to ceiling—

"At once they sing, at once they pray;
They hear of Heaven, and learn the Way."

Those two men, of whom our Savior spoke, did well to go up to the Temple to pray! And *we* shall do well not to cease from the habit of assembling ourselves together for public worship in the Lord's House.

Then, dear Friends, public worship is *a part of the great system by which God blesses the world.* It has much to do with the gathering, the sustenance, the strengthening, the invigorating and the extension of the Church of Christ. And it is through the Church of Christ that God accomplishes His purposes in the world. Oh, the blessings that come to us in our public assemblies! Are there not, sometimes, days of Heaven upon earth? Have we not felt our hearts burning within us when we have been listening to the Word of God, or joining in praise or prayer? Those Houses of God where the Gospel is truly preached, whatever their architecture may be, are the beauty and the bulwarks of the land! God bless them! Wherever the Lord's people are gathered together, in a cathedral or in a barn—it does not matter where—it is none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven when God is there! And who among us would dare to stay away? As long as we have legs to carry us and health with which to use those legs, let us be found among the waiting assemblies in God's sanctuary!

For, once more, it seems to me that public worship on earth is *a rehearsal for the service of Heaven.* We shall sing together, there, Brothers and Sisters, not *solos,* but grand chorales and choruses! We shall take parts in the Divine oratorio of redemption—it will not be some *one* melodious voice, alone, that shall lift up the eternal hallelujah! I spoke playfully of our brother Mayers singing the Hallelujah Chorus all by himself, but neither he nor any other man can do that! We shall all have to take our parts to make the harmony complete. I may never be able to rise to

certain notes unless my voice shall be wondrously changed, but some other sinner, saved by Grace, will run up the scale—nobody knows how high—and what a range of melody the music will have in Heaven!

I believe that our poor scales and modes of singing, here, are nothing at all compared with what there will be in the upper regions! There, the bass shall be deeper and yet the notes shall be higher than those of earth. Even the crash of the loudest thunder shall be only like a whisper in comparison with the celestial music of the new song before the Throne of God! John spoke of it as "the voice of many waters." The waves of one ocean can make a deafening, booming noise, but in Heaven there shall be, as it were, the sound of sea on sea, Atlantic upon Pacific, one piled upon another and all dashing and crashing with the everlasting hallelujahs from the gladsome hearts of the multitude that no man can number! I expect to be there and I remember that verse in one of our hymns that says—

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise;
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!"

But you cannot sing that heavenly anthem alone, because however well you can sing by yourself, that is not the way you will have to sing in Heaven—there you will have to sing in harmony with all the blood-washed hosts. Therefore let us often come up to the Lord's House, and when we are gathered together, let us again take up the words of Dr. Watts, and say—

"I have been there and still would go,
'Tis like a little Heaven below."

That little Heaven below shall help to prepare us for the great Heaven above!

That is our first observation, then. It is well to worship God in public.

II. Secondly, IT IS WELL TO HAVE A REASON WHEN WE GO UP TO PUBLIC WORSHIP. "Two men went up into the Temple *to pray."* They went there for that express purpose.

Now, whenever we go to the assembly of God's people, we should have some good reason—and the right reason is that which these two men had—they went up to the Temple to *pray*. I would rather that you came with a bad reason than that you did not come at all. I have known people come to pick pockets and yet they have gone away with a blessing. I am sorry if any of you came, tonight, for that reason, yet I am glad that you are here. Perhaps friends will prevent you from committing the sin of theft by taking a little extra care of their pockets! I have known persons go into the House of God out of sheer mockery and yet God has blessed them, for His ways are strangely sovereign. But that is to be ascribed to matchless mercy and it is not the way we ought to appear before the Lord!

When we go to the sanctuary, we should go for a reason, we should go up to pray—*we should not go merely from custom.* Do we not often do that? Not so much on Thursday nights, I think, for people come, then,

because they like to come. But on Sundays it is such a proper thing with certain persons to go to a place of worship that they almost wish it was *not* so proper and they would like to have a good excuse for staying home! Well, if you come only out of custom and you do not get a blessing, I pray you, do not wonder at it! If you do not come for anything and you do not *get* anything, do not be disappointed! If you go to a shop across the road and do not mean to buy anything, do not be surprised if you come out with nothing—and if you come here and do not need anything, very well, you will go away with nothing! Is it not just what you might have expected? He who goes to the river and takes no rod or net with him, will have no fish in his basket, even though there may be shoals of them in the water! So, if we want to be blessed in our worship, we must come with a reason, even as these two men went up into the Temple "to pray."

Neither do I think that we should come up to the assembly of God's people *merely to hear sermons.* The proper thing is to come "*to pray*." "But we do hear sermons," says one. Yes, but I hope that does not hinder your praying! Somebody said, the other day, that people who go to Church go to pray, but that we who go to Chapel go to hear sermons. My dear Friend, that remark shows what sort of sermons you get at Church, because those who come to hear us preach pray while we are preaching and they find that there is nothing that helps them to pray as much as a good sermon does! In fact, there is no worship of God that is *better* than the hearing of a sermon! I venture to say that if a sermon is well heard, it puts faith in exercise as you believe it, it puts love in exercise as you enjoy it, it puts gratitude in exercise as you think of all the blessings that God has given to you!

If the sermon is what it should be, it stirs all the coals of fire in your spirit and makes them burn with a brighter flame and a more vehement heat. To imply that hearing a sermon is not worship is really to slander your minister! It must be a very bad sermon in which there is, as it were, a jerk out of the prayers to get into it, for the supplication should lead up to the sermon, and then the discourse should be a continuation of the prayer that has preceded it and bring it back upon the mind, again, so that all present may pray the better and worship God the more acceptably because of the sermon to which they have been listening.

Still, if anybody comes to hear a sermon, especially as, perhaps, some of you came while I was away, to criticize the preacher, that is not the way to get a blessing! I do not mind if you criticize *me*—you may do that when you like—only you will not get blessed by doing it. But when there are other preachers here and someone says that he does not like this one, and another says that he does not like the other, then, if you do not get a blessing out of the service, who is to blame? "Two men went up into the Temple *to pray."* And if we go to the House of God and seek to turn the whole of the worship into a prayer, we shall not come away without a blessing! The main objective in all worship is that we get near to God and really pray to Him.

Neither do I think that we should go to the House of God *merely to get comforted and cheered.* That is a very sweet result from hearing the Word of God, but it should not be our main objective in going to hear it—we should meet together that we may draw near to God. If it is the Lord's will not to comfort but to rebuke us, and if it is His purpose not to cheer but to cast us down, we shall still feel, "What I received came from God. I prayed to Him and He spoke to me and I had special fellowship with the living God, while I was also in communion with my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. That is what I went for, and that is what I have had."

The publican teaches us what we should go to the House of God to do and to say. There should be, in God's Presence, *confession of sin.* We should, each one of us, when we draw near to the Lord, bow down in His Presence with reverent awe. If the very angels veil their faces when they come near Him, we must humbly bow before Him when we come to worship in His House! He is in Heaven and we are upon earth. He is our Father, but He is also our Father who is in Heaven—and we poor sinful creatures can never come into the light of His Presence without perceiving that we are full of sin. I have heard some people talk about "walking in the light as God is in the light," as if that meant that they had no sin. Listen to what the Apostle John says, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." And then, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son," is still needed, for even then it, "cleanses us from all sin." Without its continual application, there would be no walking in the light—and the more walking in the Light of God there is, the clearer will be the perception of every speck and stain in the character! So, the more true our worship is, the more certain shall we be to *make confession of sin.*

Communion with God and confession of sin should always be remembered by us when we come up to the House of God.

Then there should be *asking for mercy.* We should come as paupers seeking relief. We should come as rebels craving pardon. We should come as pardoned ones still asking renewed tokens of forgiveness—as men, once washed, who still come, that their feet may be cleansed—that they may be clean every whit as they pursue their course on the journey of life.

In the publican's prayer there is, in the Greek, *a reference to sacrifice.* He cried, "Lord, be propitious to me, the sinner." "Have mercy upon me for the sake of the Great Propitiation, the Great Expiation." They who come up to God's House for the right reason, come to find Jesus, to prove the power of His precious blood, to be perfumed with the incense of His all-sufficient merit and to be covered with His matchless righteousness! That is the right way of coming up to the assembly of God's people, to speak with Him humbly, for we are sinful. Prayerfully, for we are full of need. Believingly, for Jesus has offered a Sacrifice and we are accepted in and through Him. That, dear Friends, is the second division of my discourse—it is well to have a reason when we go up to public worship.

I will pause, here, and pass a few questions round for everyone to ask, "Did I come, tonight, for such a reason? Is that my general habit, to go up to my place of worship for such a reason? Or do I go jauntily, as if it were an ordinary transaction to go up for the worship of God?" I will not propose any answers to you—your own consciences will be able to give the reply. Only let them speak and God bless the inquiry to you all!

III. Thirdly, IT IS POSSIBLE TO GO UP TO PUBLIC WORSHIP WITH A GOOD REASON AND YET TO FORGET IT. "Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican."

It was very remarkable that a Pharisee should forget his reason—that is the one point concerning him to which I am going to call your attention—he went up to the Temple to pray, but he did *not pray*. He never prayed a word, but he did something else. If it had been written, "Two men went up into the Temple to boast," I would give the Pharisee the palm, for he certainly did that magnificently! But as it is said, "Two men went up into the Temple *to pray*," then it is certain that this Pharisee quite forgot why he had come, for he never prayed at all!

Well, now, who was the gentleman that forgot his reason? It *was the person who ought especially to have remembered it,* for he was a Pharisee! By profession he was a separatist from others because of his supposed peculiar holiness. He was a man amazingly acquainted with the Word of God, at least, with the letter of it. He wore some little black boxes between his eyes with texts of Scripture inscribed upon them and he wore others round his wrist. And he had very broad blue borders on his garments, for he was particularly observant of what he read in the Law of Moses. And, generally, a Pharisee was a teacher. He was first cousin to a Scribe and often was a Scribe, himself. He had written out a copy of the Law and he had its precepts at his fingertips!

Now, surely, if there is anybody who goes up to the Temple to pray, this is the man who will pray. If anybody forgets why he came, it will not be this person! But, listen. That was the very man who *did* forget all about it and this may be true of a minister, a deacon, an elder, one of the Brothers and Sisters who prays at Prayer Meetings, the leader of a Bible class, a teacher in the Sunday school, the best sort of people. "Oh," you exclaim, "we cannot say anything but what is honorable of them!" And yet it was one of this class who forgot why he went up into the Temple! Let me remind you Church members who make a loud profession, that it was a great professor who went up to the Temple to pray and did not do it! What would you say to your boy, who went to a shop, and then came home and said that he had forgotten his reason? And what will you say to yourself, dear Friend, especially if you happen to be somebody notable, if it should be *you* who went up to the Temple to pray, and did not pray? Oh, do not let it be so in your case! Do not, tonight, leave this house till you have had real fellowship with God, through JESUS CHRIST His Son, if you have never had it before!

How do we know that this man forgot his reason? We know it by what he said. *He did not pray at all.* He said, *"God,* I thank You that I am not

as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." By his words he must be judged, as you and I will be—and his words go to prove that he forgot why he went up to the Temple. He acted as though he was in his own house, praising himself, instead of being in God's House, where the Lord, alone, is to be praised!

Why did this man fall into this great blunder and forget why he went up to the Temple? He did it because *he was so full of himself that there was no room for God in his heart.* He was so satisfied with himself that he felt no need of prayer. He already had all that he required and he had so much that he could only stand still and overflow with a kind of gratitude to the one to whom he owed everything, namely, *himself*. Though he said, *"God,* I thank *You*," He did not mean it—he meant all the praise for himself! He was so fine a bird and had such rich feathers that he felt that everybody ought to admire him as much as he admired himself!

Well now, Brothers and Sisters, you will say to me, "Has this any bearing upon us?" Listen. Do you ever feel perfectly satisfied with yourselves? Are there not times when there is no sin that burns the conscience, when you think that you are *somebody*, a pattern saint, a highly experienced good old man, a rare Christian matron, and so on? The devil tells you all that, does he not? And you believe him! Or else you say that you are such a smart young man—you have only lately joined the Church, yet you have already got into the Lord's work in a wonderful way—there must be a great deal in you. You do not put this boasting into English, because we do not talk English to our hearts when we get proud—it is a sort of Greek which we talk, by which we try to conceal our own meaning from ourselves! Then we feel, perhaps, that we are getting *perfect*—and that is the time when we forget to pray! And we go into the House of God and, when we come out, we make some remark about the preacher's manner, or about Sister So-and-So, whose bonnet is really too smart for a Christian woman to wear, or about our friend, So-and-So, who spoke rather roughly to us. We—WE— WE—we are so good that we can find fault with all others and say, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican!" And then we do not pray.

Whenever you get one inch above the ground in your own esteem, you are that inch too high! The way to Heaven is down, down, down! As to self, it must sink. Our sense of sin must grow deeper and deeper, and a sense of obligation to Grace must be more and more fully impressed upon our heart until we are able to say with great emphasis, though it is in the deep silence of the soul, "God be merciful to me, the sinner!" Otherwise, we shall come to the Temple on the reason of prayer and we shall forget it. We shall go to the closet to pray and yet shall not pray. Or we shall read the Bible and not find anything upon which to feed our *souls* because we are not hungry, but full. We shall not seek true wealth, because we shall fancy we are not poor, but rich. We shall not go to the Source of all might because we shall imagine we are not weak, but

strong. If we go up to the Temple as the Pharisee did, there will be nothing for us, even in the place where prayer is known to be made.

IV. So I close this discourse with a fourth observation. IT IS POSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT OUR REASON FOR GOING TO PUBLIC WORSHIP. We *can* go up to the Temple to pray and *really* pray!

Who is the man who is most likely to pray? According to this parable, it was the publican. *It was a man under a sense of sin.* It was a man who felt that he was *the* sinner, even if nobody else was a sinner. It was this man to whom sin was a reality, not a fiction, and to whom the mercy of God was a real need, and not a mere doctrine, who craved that mercy at the Throne of God and felt that only Sovereign Grace could give it! It was this man who pleaded the precious blood of the Propitiation and felt that only by that way could he receive pardon. That was the man who truly prayed! Oh, have I not, sometimes, gone to pray with a breaking heart, groaning, crying and longing to see my Lord's face, and to have a sense of acceptance in the Beloved? And I have come away and felt that I had not prayed because I could not use language and words such as I would wish to use—and yet, on looking back, I have seen that it was *then* that I prayed most!

Next to the sense of *sin,* the publican had *a sense of need.* When the need is felt the heaviest, prayer is truest. When the soul is lowest, then the flood of supplication is the highest. I am sure you pray best when you have least satisfaction with yourself, and you get nearest to God when you get farthest from self. When you feel that you are not worthy to lift up your eyes to Heaven, it is *then* that Heaven's eyes look down on you! The sorrowful thought of a broken heart is immeasurably better than the indifference of a callous spirit. Bless God for a humble mind that trembles at His Word—it is much better than that presumption which puts aside all feeling. There are some who will go to Heaven questioning their own state all the way, yet they will arrive there safely. And there are some who never doubted their state who may have to doubt it when it is too late! Anyway, it is a deep sense of *sin*, a deep sense of *need*, a deep sense of *dependence* upon Sovereign Grace, that helps a man to come to the House of God and to go away with his mission accomplished.

Let us all try to bring our needs before God. Let us sink ourselves in His Presence into the very depths, and then let us come and joyfully take what He freely offers to all who trust His dear Son! Let us receive Grace at His hands, not as courtiers who have a right, but as those who feel like dogs under the table and yet cry, "Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table."

The publican excites our pity as we hear his groans and sighs, and see him smite upon his breast. But when we know that this is the man whom God blessed, and that he went to his house justified, rather than the other, we no longer pity him, but we seek to emulate *his repentance and his Grace*, and we pray the Lord to help us, thus, to come to His feast with a hearty appetite, thus to come to His wardrobe conscious of

our own rags, thus to come to His fullness admitting our own emptiness, thus to come to the Fountain of Eternal Life feeling that apart from it we are dead! Then shall we truly pray, even as this despised publican did!

Poor Soul, almost in despair, you think, "I have no right to be here. I am so guilty, I am so vile." You are the very sort of sinner Christ died to save! Not sham sinners who have to pretend to be sinners, but *you miserable sinners*, you *real sinners*! Not you who make marks on your skin, like some beggars do, that you may seem to be wounded, but you who are as bad as you can be—you who have sinned so deeply that you feel as if you were already lost, you who lie at Hell's dark door, you who are dragged about by the hair of your head by the foul fiend of the Pit—you who are in your own esteem the worst of all men! Come to Christ tonight!

Make way for them! Stand back, for these are the people He came to save! He has come "to seek and to save that which was lost." Believe that Christ died to save you, and you are saved! Throw yourself on His atoning Sacrifice, and it avails for you at once! Glorify Him by trusting Him for your salvation! Let Him be your High Priest and, from first to last, your Savior, and He is yours as surely as you are a living man or woman! Go your way justified rather than the other who does not need the Propitiation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 122; LUKE 18:1-14.

We will read two portions of Scripture relating to public worship. The first will be Psalm 122, one of David's "Songs of degrees."

Psalm 122:1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the House of the LORD.* "I was glad for my own sake, for I hungered and thirsted to go into the House of the Lord. I was glad for the sake of those who offered to go with me, for I delight to see in others a longing desire to profit by the means of Grace. I was glad when they said unto me, '*Let us* go into the house of the *Lord.*'"

2, 3. *Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together.* So is every true Church of God when it is in a healthy state. There are no divisions, no schisms—"*Jerusalem* is built as a city that is compact together." It is not a long straggling street, a dislocated village, but all the houses are rightly and regularly placed and surrounded with strong munitions of defense against the adversary. May this Church always be blessed with such unity that it shall be as a city that is compact together!

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.* We should go up to the House of God, then, for two purposes. First, "unto the testimony of Israel," *that* is, to hear what *God* testifies to us and, also, to publicly testify our confidence in Him. And, next, we should go up "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Especially should we do this when we have been restored from beds of languishing sickness and pain, or when we come

up from the house of mourning. But what is there in God's House that should tempt us to go there?

5. *For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.* The preaching of the Gospel is like the setting up of a Throne of Judgment, "for the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing, even, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And long before the last Great Judgment Day arrives, and the final assize begins, the ministry of the Gospel is God's Judgment Seat at which ungodly men may learn what they are in the sight of the Judge of All—what their present state of condemnation is and what it will finally be unless they repent!

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* Ask that she may be free from persecution without, and from anything like disturbance within—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

6. *They shall prosper that love You.* Neglect of the means of Grace is the death of all soul-prosperity. But an earnest love of the House of God and all who belong to God will bring us true spiritual prosperity.

7-9. *Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you. Because of the House of the LORD our God I will seek your good.* Now let us read a short passage out of the Gospel according to Luke.

Luke 18:1-7. *And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?* He hears their prayer a long time because it does not weary Him. It pleases Him! He loves to hear their sighs and cries, but will He not yield to their entreaties? What do you think? Shall not the good, gracious, loving God yield, at length?

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* Faith enough to make such prayers as this? Faith enough to pray with importunity? Oh, if we had faith enough to resolve to have a blessing and determined never to cease crying to God *until we had it*, we should have far more favors than we have so far gained from our God!

9-12. *And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* A fine pea-

cock, truly! See how he spreads out his feathers and struts before God, glorifying himself?

13. *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. "The* sinner," it should be—it is emphatically so in the Greek. There is a Pharisee, *the* righteous man according to his own estimate, and all the rest were sinners. Here is the publican, he is *the* sinner, and he thinks everybody else is righteous. These were two very conspicuous individuals, the self-righteous man and the sinner! And they are both here tonight! I will not ask them to stand up, but no doubt they are both of them present. Now what became of them?

14. *I tell you, this man*—The sinner

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* It is God's usual method to reverse what man does and to turn things the other way around—"Everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." You remember how the Virgin Mary, in her song, praised the Lord for this very habit of His—"He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty." That is His regular way of working and He will continue to do so!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 122 (SONG 1), 999, 607.

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.

ETERNAL LIFE!
NO. 2396

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 20, 1895,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINOTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 1887.

"This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."
John 17:3.

"We are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."
1 John 5:20, 21.

OUR subject this morning [Sermon #1946, Volume 33—*Eternal Life within Present Grasp*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] was concerning laying hold on eternal life, and I thought that I would say a little more, tonight, about eternal life. Many people, when they hear or read that expression, suppose that it means Heaven. It does mean that, but it means much more. Eternal life commences *here*—it begins in the Believer as soon as he is born again. Then he receives into him that same life which he will have throughout eternity! Eternal life is not a thing of changes. The river widens and deepens, as I showed you this morning, but it is always the same river of the Water of Life—it always flows from the same Source—it is always constituted in the same manner. The life of the new-born Christian who, only a few minutes ago began to pray, is precisely the same life which is to be found in yonder bright spirits that have now been thousands of years in perfection at the right hand of God praising His name! Death does not transport Believers into a new life—it simply rids us of certain impediments that hamper our true life in its upward flow. The life of the Christian, here, is the triumphant life that is to be enjoyed hereafter! It is one and the same life so far as its real nature is concerned.

It was the great end of the life, death and work of Christ to give this eternal life to all Believers. He came into the world on purpose, that they should forever live through Him. He has not accomplished His design in you, my Hearer, unless He has made you live unto God. There is a Savior—that you know—but He is *not* your Savior unless He has infused into you a life infinitely superior to that which was born in you at the first. "You must be born again." And by that new birth you must receive a higher and more Divine life than that which throbs in your bosom by nature. Judge for yourself whether Christ has come into the world to any purpose that affects you and especially judge whether you have received eternal life at His hands. Remember how it is written, "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." The ever-living God is not the Father of dead souls, but He is the Father of those whom He has *quickened*—and the power to become sons of God lies, in a great measure, in the life which is Divinely imparted to all who receive Christ and believe on His name.

It is in the power of Christ to give this eternal life. In the verse preceding our first text, the Lord Jesus, addressing His Father, says of Himself, "You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." The Father has life in Himself and He quickens all who live—and even so, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has life in Himself—and this life He imparts to all who believe in Him. It is in His power to bestow that life upon every soul that trusts Him and He delights in exercising His Divine prerogative.

Our Lord Jesus bestows this eternal life only upon His elect. Speaking to His Father, in the verse I quoted just now, He says of Himself, "You have given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." God has an elect people. So long as the Bible endures, there is no way of getting that doctrine out of it unless men willfully pervert its plainest teaching. From before the foundation of the world the Lord chose a people unto Himself, according to the Sovereign purpose of His own will, even as He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

These people whom God has chosen are made known by their being quickened, in due time, into a higher and superior life than that of the flesh. Till then they are like the rest of mankind—dead as the dry bones of Ezekiel's Valley of Vision—but the Divine breath of the Eternal Spirit blows upon them and they are made to live and stand upon their feet, an exceedingly great army! By this test can all of you know whether you are the subjects upon whom God's Grace has worked. Is there a new life within your soul? Have you been raised from death unto life? Have you been made to feel new emotions, new desires, new longings, new pains and new joys? For, if you have, then are you the people of God! But if not, I pray that in you, also, Divine Grace may yet be thus magnified.

The question for us now to consider is in what does this eternal life consist? I do not propose to answer the question as it might be answered, in various ways, but only according to the first of our two texts—"This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."

I. First, then, ETERNAL LIFE CONSISTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ONLY TRUE GOD.

Let us think for a little while upon the lack of this knowledge. The loss of this knowledge followed upon the Fall. As long as man knew his God, trusted his God and obeyed his God, he was happy enough. But man must know the fallen spirit and, once making acquaintance with him, man must know the knowledge of good and evil. And, contrary to the Lord's command, he must take of the forbidden fruit and eat. So he lost the knowledge of God and, with that loss, he lost everything! The highest

privilege of manhood is to be acquainted with God—and when our first father turned his back upon God and began to unlearn whatever he had known of his Creator and to forget all that had been revealed concerning his Lord, then came the Fall—and it was a fall, indeed!

Out of this lack of knowledge of God grew all manner of idolatries. Man must have a God—he cannot be happy without one. There are some who struggle hard before they yield, but, as surely as a dog must have a master, so surely man must have a God! There is a great superior Being, our Creator, Preserver and Judge, whom we must have as our Redeemer, or else we are utterly undone. Without God, our nature is disabled and divided—its best part has run away—it becomes dead, in fact, when it becomes separated from God. It was the lack of knowledge of the only true God that led men to bow down before blocks of wood and stone, to worship the sun, moon and stars—and to set up all manner of visible objects and to say of them—"These are our gods." Oh, to what terrible mischief, to what mental and spiritual death, the lack of the knowledge of God has led the sons of men!

Nor is this all that the lack of the knowledge of the true God has produced in us. It has spoiled the best aspirations of the noblest men such as Plato and Socrates. Blindly feeling after God, yet without truly knowing Him, what could they do? They could rise to no great height—they could accomplish but little. Men such as they reared an altar and inscribed thereon, "To the unknown god." But what kind of prayer is that which is offered to a god whom we do not know? What comfort can come out of an unknown god? What peace, what rest, what joy can come from a being after whom we grope in the dark, but whom we do not know? Not to know the only true God is death—death even to the noblest spirits among us! But it is a much more terrible death to those who, knowing nothing of God, seek that which will please self, indulge their vile lusts and follow their unbridled passions! What is all that, indeed, but the result of the fact that, not knowing God, they are seeking to submit themselves to some other lord? Man must have a master! He is like a horse that must have a rider! He is so constituted that unless he yields himself to a power superior to himself, he grovels and sinks down yet more and more until his condition is little better than that of the beasts that perish! Indeed, in some respects, he is worse off than they are.

I can scarcely picture what manhood would have been if we had never fallen. The chief joy, I think, would have been that each one among us would have had the only true God as ours. We should have been born into the world, whatever our circumstances, under the patronage of God! We would have gone forth to our labor, sweetly singing in the companionship of God. We would have retired to our rest at night—supposing that things had been as they are now—and we would have fallen asleep as in the embraces of our God, or on our Father's breast. Days would have had a brightness about them superior to any the sun can yield, and nights would have had nothing for us to dread even in their densest darkness, for the Lord would still have been there! As a child is happy and knows no care nor need while a good father provides for him everything he needs, such would man have been. Oh, men are miserable who

have not known their God! Unhappy men! Well may Scripture speak of them as dead, for it is death to be without the knowledge of God!

But, Brothers and Sisters, what is this knowledge of God which is eternal life? Let us talk a little about *the meaning of this knowledge.* It is *not* eternal life to know that there *is* a God! A great many people know as much as that and still remain dead. Those who know not that there is a God are dead in the dark, but those who know that there is a God and yet do not trust Him, are dead in the light! That condition is, perhaps, the worse of the two. At any rate, it involves a greater responsibility. Yet, to know that there is a God is not the same thing as *knowing* God. I may know that there is a Queen of England, but I may not know her. I know that there are many persons in the world whom I do not know and it is a sad thing for anyone to know that there is a God and yet not truly to know God.

To explain what is meant by knowing God, I must say, first, that it is to know Him as God, that is to say, to know Him as God to us. I have already told you that everybody has something that is god to him—something that is superior to himself and which rules him—something to which he looks up to and which he worships. Now, the great invisible Jehovah, the one God that made Heaven and earth, in whose hands our breath is, who has revealed Himself in the Trinity of His Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—the God of the whole earth, must be God to us! That means that we reverence Him, that we bow before Him as worshippers, that we submit ourselves to His Law, that we seek to do His pleasure. No man really knows God who does not know Him as God, and does not accept Him as His God—and to accept God as your God is eternal life! This is how eternal life becomes yours! And if you have come to that point, you have eternal life.

Still, that statement does not fully explain what it is to know God. It is to be on terms of personal acquaintance with Him. The Lord is not to be seen, neither can His footsteps be heard, but to know God is to be conscious of His Presence by an inward sense which does both see and hear. It is to feel that He is everywhere—on the land or on the sea and, knowing that He is there, to rejoice in being with Him! In fact, it is to find great delight in this God who is not far from any of us. It is to be (let me put it very plainly) *on speaking terms with Him*! It is to be so reconciled to Him that you have no dread of Him, no bondage and fear when you think of Him.

You then regard God as your best Friend whom you love and, in whom you delight, to whom you talk as naturally as you talk to friend or father, into whose bosom you pour your griefs, into whose heart you tell your joys. God is nearer than your most familiar friend, nearer to you than eyes and ears, nearer to you than your own body, for He gets within your soul, which your body can never do! If you really know, experimentally, what I am talking about, you have eternal life. If this is so, that you know the only true God, distinctly recognizing His Presence, speaking with Him and rejoicing in Him and, if, above all, you are striving to be like He—if His Spirit in you is photographing the image of God upon your nature so

that the old image, which He gave to Adam, but which was effaced by sin, is being reproduced in you by the Holy Spirit—then you know the only true God and this, dear Friends, is eternal life!

Now, having shown you what the lack of this knowledge produces and the meaning of this knowledge, let me briefly speak of *the connection between the knowledge of God and eternal life*.

A man without God is a living man, of course, for he works, he eats, he drinks. Yes, but he has missed the only true life. He has missed a secret happiness which is the very *essence* of life and, without which life is really death. You do not know it, dear Hearer, if you have never believed in Christ! And I do not expect you to believe what I say, but let me tell you that there is a something that makes life worth living when you once come to know God. There is a secret bliss—I cannot call it anything less than bliss! There is a little Heaven, a compendious, compressed, essential Heaven which God drops into that soul that lives with Him, so that we know that which makes us leap for joy and makes us bless God that we were ever created! If I had no God, I could say, "Cursed was the day in which it was said to my mother that a man-child was born into the world." But now I thank God for my existence! Sometimes, when in great pain and anguish, yet having God with me, I have felt inclined not to curse the day of my birth, but to rejoice that I was ever born, even if I had to live a life of perpetual pain, seeing that I have a God who is, indeed, my own!

To have a God also means that you have a grand objective in life. Look at many of you, how you work hard from morning to night just to provide enough to keep body and soul together. If you have not a God, you are wretched creatures, indeed! But the slave who tugs at the oar of the galley and receives no pay but the cruel lash, is a happy and blessed man if God is with him! Many and many a Huguenot prisoner, condemned for life to the galleys because of his faith, has been happier than the king upon his throne who thrust him there! With God, all conditions of life become life that is life, indeed—but without Him, there is nothing to live for! Here is a poor fellow who lives till he has accumulated millions—it must be all the harder to die and leave so much, must it not? What is the good of it? To get a paragraph in the Illustrated London News saying that So-and-So died worth so much? Oh, the misery of having existed for so small a result! But when you have God, you have something to live for, something that makes every little thing sublime and turns the most common actions of daily life into a holy exercise of a royal priesthood unto the Most High!

The man who has God also has the explanation of a great many things which puzzle other people and he has something better, still, for he has his God to fall back upon when he cannot explain anything. I like, sometimes, to have to pull up against a huge granite rock and feel, "I never shall see through that rock and I shall never see my way through that difficulty." Well, I do not need to see my way through it! I do not need a tunnel from here to New Zealand—do you? I know that I cannot go through the very heart of the earth and I have no wish to do so. I am very glad to know that I cannot, by a stamp of my foot, force my way through

to the other side of the globe—it would be a poor globe if I could! I would not worship a god that I could fully understand. I do not know how I would feel devout over a faith which I perfectly comprehended. If I could put my religion into my pocket, like a box of lozenges, I should soon suck it all away, but I like something that is grander than my loftiest thought, more sublime than my noblest conceptions, and which tops me altogether! And I find it a blessed thing in life, when troubled with all these difficult problems of our teeming population and ever-present distress, to fall back upon this fact—"There is a God who will overrule it all and, from the seeming evil, will produce a good—and from that good something better, to His own praise and glory!"

A man with God—you may strip him, but he is clothed in the Light of God. A man with God—you may shut him up in prison, but he is perfectly at liberty, for his spirit soars into the immensities! A man with God—he may be afflicted with a hundred diseases at once, but he has the best of all health, even the sanity of his soul! A man with God has a window to his room—a man without God goes round, and round, and round, and looks, but does not see anything at all! Sometimes he thinks, "I wish that I could see something, but there is nothing to be seen." To those who are without God, the future is all a blank—they call themselves "agnostics"—that is, men who do not know anything. But you who have God look for eternal life in His Presence. If men talk to you of joy, you say, "Oh, yes, there must be joy to one who is at peace with God. It cannot be that any man who loves God and is reconciled to Him, should be perpetually unhappy!" That cannot be, so that, in knowing God, there springs up in the man's heart a hope, no, an *assurance* that it must be well with his soul and that, though Heaven and earth should pass away, God's Word can never pass away and, therefore, the safety of the man who clings to that Word must be secure! Yes, to know the only true God is to get where life is life, to get into eternal life—not mere existence, but into that which is worthy to be called life, indeed!

II. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, in the second place, notice that ETERNAL LIFE ALSO CONSISTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST, WHOM GOD HAS SENT—"This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."

Our second text shows that the first one by no means implies that Jesus Christ is not God, for it expressly declares, concerning Jesus Christ, "This is the true God, and eternal life." This is the teaching of both passages. *It would not be eternal life to know God apart from Christ.* God the Father, apart from Jesus Christ, is just an Almighty Being infinitely just, whose Laws I have violated—a Being infinitely loving, who would bless me, but who cannot do so while I violate His Laws—a God full of tremendous power and unerring wisdom who would exercise all these for me but that I, having broken His Law, the penalties of that Law are inevitable, and cannot be reversed! It was wise and just on God's part to append a penalty to sin—nothing could be crueler than to allow men to sin without being punished for it! It would be abhorrent to a God of Love as much as to a God of Justice if sin could be made a trifle and there were no punishment attached to it. The first knowledge you and I ever get of

God, when we come to know Him, is as One who is infinitely loving, but who, nevertheless, no, who, *for that very reason*, is infinitely Just and *must punish sin*.

No one knows the true God in the real sense of knowledge except through Jesus Christ, for no man comes unto the Father but by the Son. But even if he could know God, in a measure, apart from the Revelation of Him in Christ Jesus, it would be a knowledge of terror that would make him flee away and avoid God! It would not be life to our souls to know God apart from His Son, Jesus Christ! We must know the Christ whom He has sent or our knowledge does not bring eternal life to us. But, Beloved, when we see God in Christ meeting us, demanding a penalty and yet providing it, Himself, decreeing the punishment most justly and then bearing it *Himself*. When we see Him to be both Judge and Expiation, both Ruler and Sacrifice, then we see that "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." Then it is, in the knowledge of God *in* Christ and God *through* Christ, that we find that we have entered into eternal life!

Let me add, here, that it would not be eternal life to know Jesus Christ *if He were not God*—if, as some say, He was only a good man—that He was only a good man is impossible, for He was the worst of impostors if He was not God, for He spoke of Himself as God! And if He were not Divine, then He imposed on men. If He were nothing but a mere man, how could He give us eternal life? And of what use were trust in Him? But if He who bled on Calvary was very God of very God, as well as Man, then the sacrifice He offered has an infinite value about it and I, even I, dare trust my soul to Him with the full assurance that there must be, in such a Savior, ability to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

How do we come to know Christ? I do not think it necessary, at this time, to explain much about how we know Christ, because I am addressing thousands of persons who do know Him. Brothers and Sisters, you know Christ *in the glory of His Divine Person*, God and Man. You have no doubts about either His Deity or His Humanity—you have tasted of the sympathy that comes to you through His Manhood, and you have felt the majesty of His Godhead—He is to you your Brother and yet your God! You know Him, then, in the glory of His Person.

You also know Him in *the peace-speaking power of His precious blood*. This is, to me, the best evidence of the Truth of our holy religion. I was once troubled and tossed to and fro, driven almost to despair under a sense of sin—it was only when I understood Christ's *substitutionary* Sacrifice and realized that He stood in my place and bore my sin in His own body on the Cross that I obtained peace with God! I know the power of His blood by the peace it brought me! Do not many of you know it also? I am sure that many of you do. Whenever sin returns to assail you and you get troubled and perplexed, do you not go and look, again, to Christ upon the Cross, and all your anxiety disappears? The wounds of Jesus bleed a balsam that heals your wounds! And His death yields the life that delivers you from going down to death!

We also know Christ in *the perfection of His righteousness*. By faith we have put on that glorious robe and we have gone in unto God with our Brother's garments on—and the Lord has accepted us for His sake—and we have come from the Divine Presence exceedingly comforted and blessed, "accepted in the Beloved." We know, dear Friends, now, what communion with God means. I have never seen Him, but I know Him better than anybody I ever saw! I have never heard His voice, nor do I expect to hear it till these ears are deaf in the grave, unless the Lord should first come suddenly, but I know His voice better than I know the voice of anyone on earth! I can discern it in a moment. A stranger will I not follow, for I know not the voice of strangers, but if there is any Truth of God uttered, I know that Truth by a kind of instinct within my soul. The charm of it is that Jesus has spoken it and it commands my immediate loyal acceptance. Question anything Christ has said? Brethren, if I find Christ contradicting everything that I ever *thought of*, or any decision I had *arrived at*, I would, without regret, fling every thought in my mind to the winds—and I would embrace each syllable that He has spoken with a joy most intense and a loyalty that never questions!

I have heard of "life in London." I do not know much about what that expression means, but I know what life in Christ is, and there is nothing like it! *Life in Heaven is only life in Christ*—if He were gone from the realms of bliss, there would be no life in Heaven, itself—the center, the core, the soul of the everlasting joy of the redeemed lies in the fact of Christ being with them and their knowing Him! This is life eternal, to know Jesus Christ whom God has sent, and to know God in Him.

This will give you life, you daughters of despair who are at death's dark door—know God and Christ and you shall live! This will give you life, you disappointed ones, to whom life seems to be like a sucked orange which you would gladly throw away! This will be the cup of life, again, and put into it the nectar of true life. This will give you something to trust in! This will give you rest to your spirit, this will give you power for service, this will give you a holy expectancy for the world to come! In fact, everything that life means comes to the man who knows God and knows Christ—and everything that death means comes to the man who does *not* know God, and does *not* know Christ—he is dead even while he continues to exist.

I have finished all my discourse but for one fragment. Did you notice the last clause in our second text? "This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Do you see the drift of the Apostle's injunction? You live by the true God, you live by Jesus Christ—therefore, keep yourselves from idols. Idols are untrue gods and they are death to you. Therefore, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Of course, I need not say to you that we must carefully preserve our integrity in the matter of worshipping anything that *can be seen*. No child of God may dare to worship a picture, an image, or anything that is visible! I would like to break out of every church window every image of the saints, lest it should be worshipped—and especially to banish from all public observation every symbol and sign that ever has been worshipped in the Church of Rome lest they should be worshipped again! I see, in the

symbolism of certain churches, a tendency to set up something visible as an object of worship. Remember the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me," that is, have *nothing* to worship but God, and then, next, "You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep My Commandments."

The worship of the cross, the crucifix, the "consecrated" bread, or anything of that kind is sheer idolatry, and it always brings death with it. Gospel Light dies out when anything but the true God is worshipped. Therefore, away with idols! Have a holy iconoclastic zeal against anything that is regarded by men with the reverence which is due to God, alone!

But keep yourselves from all other idols—from the idols of your own brain, from creeds of your own making, from thoughts of your own imagining. Keep yourselves from letting anything but God rule you. Keep yourselves from golden idols—keep yourselves from the love of fame—keep yourselves from the adoration of human science! "Keep yourselves from idols." There is no God but God and Christ Jesus, His Son, is the only Mediator between God and men. Keep yourselves from allowing anything but God to get the upper hand of you. Make not gods of yourselves, your own persons—make not gods of your families, make not gods of your children.

Verily, I say unto you, there are many who worship their children and set them up as little gods! And when they are taken away from them, as they will be when they worship them, then they cry out against God most bitterly. How could they think that God would allow the little Dagons to be set up in His place? It must be God first, God last, God midst, and God, without end! May He make it so with us that, from now on, we shall have this eternal life which consists in knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?* If all your light comes from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, you need not be afraid of losing your light! "The Lord is my light and my salvation." If your salvation comes from the God of Salvation, if it is worked out by the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, you need not be afraid that you will ever be robbed of that salvation—and you may confidently sing, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

1. *The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* "He puts His own force into me and if He who is Omnipotent is the strength of my life, who can stand against me? If my strength were in myself, I might well be afraid, but if it is in God, alone, if, 'the Lord is the strength

of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?'" Dismiss your fears, then, whatever may be the cause of them, all you who are trusting in the Lord Jehovah! The causes of fear are many, but the *cure* of fear is one, namely, faith in the living God!

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* This is the record of the Psalmist's past experience. David was a soldier and he had a soldier's dangers and a soldier's deliverances. And here he writes the history of his battles. These are dispatches from the field. When the Psalmist's enemies rushed upon him like hungry lions seeking to eat him up, they stumbled and fell! He had not to fight, or even to sound a trumpet, for the Lord fought for him!

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* The past gives him confidence both for the present and for the future. Happy is the man who can fall back upon his past experience, not to make of it a bed to lie upon, but to make of it a lever with which to lift his soul out of the Slough of Despond! I think I have sometimes said that we may use our past experiences as the bargemen use their oars when they push backward to drive the boat forward. You must never lie down upon past mercies and say, "I am satisfied with all that has happened," but use the past to help you in the present and the future.

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the House of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His Temple.* David wanted to spend his days in the House of his God and we, also, may do the same, not only in the place that is used for public worship, but wherever we may be! The great House of God is everywhere and His children can always be at home with Him. That is the ideal of a Christian's life, to be always in God's House—

"No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."

David desired not only that he might dwell in God's House, but that he might spend his time in adoring contemplation of the beauty of his God—"to behold the beauty of the Lord." Did you ever think of the wonderful beauties that there are in the Character of the Most High? If you want to see them, behold Him who is altogether lovely, in whom the Father is to be most clearly seen, though veiled in human flesh! This should also be *our* lifelong work, to study, to understand, and to enjoy the beauty of the Lord, "and to enquire in His Temple," not only to see Him, but to speak with Him and to hear Him speak. A Christian is one who makes enquiries of his God—he is an enquirer when he begins, and he should be an enquirer till he ends. The Apostle Peter tells us that the angels belong to the honorable company of enquirers concerning "things that accompany salvation." "Which things the angels desire to look into." Christian men should go to God with their enquiries and when they come to public worship, this should be one great end of it, "to enquire in His Temple."

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* "For"—and this is a reason for dismissing all our fear—"in the time of trouble He

shall hide me." "I am so little that I may easily be hidden away by One so great as God is. 'He shall hide me in His pavilion,' in His own royal tent and beneath the majesty of His Sovereignty my soul shall find perfect security."

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.* "In that Most Holy Place where none can come and live but those whom God brings there! In the sacred spot where the security must be absolute! In the Tabernacle of Sacrifice sprinkled with the blood of Atonement, shall He hide me." Oh, what a hiding place is this for one who is in trouble!

6. *He shall set me up upon a rock.* What perfect security the child of God has, first, in the pavilion of Sovereignty, next, in the secrecy of Sacrifice—and thirdly, on the rock of Immutability! "He shall set me up upon a rock."

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* If an ungodly man's head were lifted up above His enemies, he would begin to denounce them and to curse them. But when a Believer's head is thus lifted up, he begins to praise his God. Then are his songs louder and sweeter than they ever were before! "I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD."

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.* I thought you were going to sing, David, but you are at prayer, I see. This is how we live spiritually—we breathe in the air by prayer, and we breathe it out by praise! This is the holy respiration of a Christian's life! Prayer and praise must be mingled in a divinely wise proportion and then they make a sweet incense, acceptable to God. I hope we can say that we have never finished praying but that we feel we must begin singing, and that we have never finished singing but that we must begin praying! What a blessed interchange this makes for the whole of life! "I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord. Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy, also, upon me, and answer me."

8. *When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD, will I seek.* The child of God knows His Father's voice and responds to it. God's Word is like a seal and we should be like the wax, ready to take the impress of it. "Seek you My face." "Your face, Lord, will I seek." It is the same expression reversed, just as it is when the seal makes an impression.

9. *Hide not Your face far from me.* I do not know why the translators put in that word, "far." It *is* printed in italics, but it should not be there at all! "Hide not Your face from me at all, my Lord. I do not ask You not to hide it far from me, but I pray You not to hide it at all! Make no break in my sunlight. Let me always see You—this is all I ask. Hide not Your face from me."

9. *Put not Your servant away in anger.* "Put not Your servant away." God will not put away His children, but He does, sometimes, put His servants away. I know that this is often a prayer of mine. I wonder whether it is yours also—"Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord." We may remain His children and yet we may scarcely be fit to be employed, any

longer, in His service. Let this be your prayer as well as David's, "Put not Your servant away in anger."

9. *You have been my help.* "Yes, that You have, O Lord! You have been my help."

9, 10. *Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* There is a poor child and his father and mother have both gone away and left him. But the Divine Father comes along, picks the child up and clasps him to His bosom—"Then the Lord will take me up." It is a wonderful thing to be taken up by God! A man prospers in business and people say, "Oh, yes, he may get on very well, for such-and-such a great man has taken him up!" But how much better shall you and I prosper who can say, "The Lord will take me up"? If He has taken us up, what a wonderful Patron we have! There is no other like the Lord!

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD.* "I am only a child. Teach me, Lord. I am fatherless and motherless. Take me into Your orphanage and teach me Your way, O Lord!"

11. *And lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* "Make my way to be very straightforward! May my life be such that I never have to apologize for it! May there be no places in it about which unpleasant questions can be asked! Lead me in a plain path because of my enemies. If they can find fault with me, they will do so and if they cannot rightly find fault with me, they will make up some accusation against me. Therefore, O Lord, 'lead me in a plain path because of my enemies.'"

12, 13. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* Men say that "seeing is believing," but that is not true—*believing* is seeing! So David says, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see." It is by *believing* that we see "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

14. *Wait on the LORD.* I think I hear David say this short sentence to each one in this great assembly tonight, "Wait on the Lord."

14. *Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say.* David says it from his own experience and thus, as it were, puts his name and seal at the end of the Psalm—"Wait, I say"—

14. *On the LORD.* Everyone who has ever proven the power of prayer may use the same words as David did! The preacher certainly does and with the Psalmist, he exclaims, "Wait, I say, on the Lord."

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.

"OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT"
NO. 2397

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 27, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 13, 1887.

"That You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves."
Isaiah 49:9.

THIS, of course, is a prophecy of what the Messiah would do. The Lord Jesus Christ, when He came among the sons of men, was to open the prison doors and to say to the prisoners, "Go forth," and to those who, in addition to being in prison, were in a dark cell, shut away from the light, He was to say, "Show yourselves."

What wonders Jesus Christ has worked! There are many of us who are living proofs of what Jesus Christ can do, for, when we were in prison, He said to us, "Come forth," and we are now free as the air, our spirits are buoyant and full of gladness and rejoicing! Some of us also sat in darkness—gloomy, thick, Egyptian night—but when Jesus came to us, that darkness fled away and now we walk in the Light of God as He is in the Light, and we have fellowship with Him, and with His Father, too, through the ever-blessed Spirit. Wonders of Grace belong to Christ! He has already worked enough to keep His redeemed amazed throughout all eternity with the splendor of the achievements of His Grace! Though He were never to work another miracle of mercy, He has already done enough to set all Heaven in amazement throughout all the ages that are yet to come, such a wondrous Savior has He proved Himself to be!

The liberty which Jesus gives to prisoners is something very marvelous. To be a prisoner for life must be a horrible thing—to be immured in a dungeon for all one's days must be almost worse than death. Yet there is a slavery of the *soul* that is worse than wearing chains upon the wrist! There is an imprisonment of the *heart* that is far more terrible than being shut up within stone walls or iron bars. When Jesus comes to the soul, He delivers us from that direst of all bondages, fetches us out from that most cruel of all slaveries, the bondage of the spirit, the slavery of the heart!

Then we are told that if there are any who are in a worse state than that of mere captivity, namely, in darkness as well as in bondage, the Lord Jesus Christ comes to them and says, "Show yourselves; rise, and come out of the darkness; hide away no longer, come forth into the light, and enjoy it." And when He speaks, His Words are effectual! When He says, "Come forth," they come forth, and when He says, "Show yourselves," they show themselves! He speaks and it is done, for every Word of Christ is the fiat of Omnipotent Love.

Now I am going to try and deal with those who are, spiritually, in the dark, in the hope that the time has arrived when they are to come forth out of the darkness and to show themselves. My business will consist, then, in two things. First, I want to *find out the characters mentioned in the text.* And, secondly, I will *repeat the exhortation that it contains.*

I. First, I have to try to FIND OUT THE CHARACTERS mentioned in the text—"Them that are in darkness." Some of them are here tonight—let me see if I can, with my Lord's gracious guidance, put my finger on them.

I observe, first, that *they were not always in darkness.* She was a bright young spirit once, after a fashion—up to all manner of fun and levity. And he—I know him very well—he seemed to be everything that mirth could make youth to be, sporting like a butterfly in summertime among the flowers. It was remarked of him that he seemed to enjoy life perfectly and, certainly, it was his intention to do so, even if he shortened his days in the process—he dashed at the flame, even though he singed his wings! But, all of a sudden, there came a cloud in the sky, both to her and to him—I mean, to *you.* It may be that some time ago a death happened in the family, or sickness came, or if it was neither of these things, at any rate, the mind suddenly grew strangely quiet and a stillness came down upon the spirit. And with that stillness there fell a gloom over the whole being. The fun and levity which had been enjoyed before were like the bubbles and froth upon the cup—there was nothing substantial or real in them at all—so, when the man or woman began to think, the bubbles and froth disappeared and then life grew flat, stale, dull and unprofitable.

What, do you think, were those thoughts that brought such a sobering influence into your life? They were somewhat like this—I can tell you about them from my own experience, for they happened to me while I was yet a boy. I thought, "I have not lived as I ought to have lived. God made me, yet I have never truly served Him. He is my mother's God, but I have forgotten Him. He is my father's God, yet I have never sought Him. Ah, me! What shall I do? God must punish me. He must punish me! If He does not do so, He ought to—He cannot be *God* if He does not act justly and I cannot, in my heart of hearts, reverence Him if He winks at my wrongdoing, for much wrongdoing has been mine. What is to become of me?" So I cried out in my agony and I struggled to be right. I thought it would be easy work to do that which would please God. I went to the helm of my ship and hoped to reverse its course. But I soon drifted into the old courses, again, and what I thought to be very easy I found to be extremely difficult—no more—absolutely impossible! I seemed soft as wax towards evil, yet hard as cast-iron or steel towards anything that was good! I could not be molded, or fashioned aright. Then I grew sad in soul and heavy of spirit—I forsook the ways of the mirthful and stole away from my companions that I might get alone. I read my Bible a great deal and the more I read it, the more the darkness thickened about me. Then I tried to pray and, ah, me, I know now that they were true prayers, but then it seemed as if my prayers were no better than the barking of a dog!

I could not hope that God would accept such prayers as *those*—and so the darkness increased around me.

I think I hear someone say, "Yes, that is my experience." So you *are* here, though your spirit is in the dark! I am right glad to meet you and while you are there in the dark, I give you my hand, for I sympathize with you—I know what this darkness means! You were not always in that condition, but I thank God you are now where you are. Perhaps you think me cruel to thank God for your misery, but I do, for this is the gateway into a joy that will be worth your having! This loss of the sham will be the finding of the real thing! This nailing of the counterfeit upon the counter will be giving you the minted gold that shall be current in the markets of Heaven!

Beside this, *a sense of sin has settled upon you*. I know it did upon me. I ate my bread at the table, but I sometimes wondered it did not choke me. I walked the earth and sometimes I was under such a sense of sin that I marveled it should continue to bear me up. I thought of the wrath of God and it did, indeed, seem to me to be "the wrath to come." I thank God that I did not, in those days, hear any of those fine preachers who tell you there is no wrath to come and you need not want to meet with such servants of the devil, for his emissaries they really are. When my conscience convinced me of sin, I verily believe that if I had heard any of these men, I would have loathed them from my very soul! The arrows of God stuck fast within my heart and I knew there must be a wrath of God against sin, for I was angry, even, with myself on account of my guilt! If God had taken me to Heaven with unforgiving sin still within my spirit, I would not have been happy! I was utterly miserable and I felt that I must continue so unless, by a Divine miracle of Grace, some great change could be worked upon me. The conscience of man, when he is really quickened and awakened by the Holy Spirit, speaks the Truth of God—it rings the great alarm bell and if he turns over in his bed and says, "A little more sleep, and a little more slumber"—that great alarm bell rings out again and again, "The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!"

The soul I am describing is in the dark and the darkness settles down in conviction of sin and, dear Friend—for I am speaking to you (though I do not know you, I am speaking straight at somebody—God knows who—who is in the dark), *you have no hope.* You go to hear sermons, longing that some Light of God may break in upon you. Some of you have been hearing the Gospel for a very long time, yet no Light has come to you. Why is it? One reason is because you shut out the Light of God. There are some of you who *refuse to be converted*—you are like sick men who, when meat is brought to them, refuse it. They turn against it, as the Psalm says, "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." I am not going to blame you, dear Heart, but I do deeply pity you, for I know that now you are hardly in your right senses, like the men at sea, of whom the Psalm says, "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end."

You hear and yet you do not hear! You have had the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to you, and very plainly, too, but you know that it is one thing to hold a lantern to a man's eyes and it is another thing to take the scales off those eyes and make him see. So is it with you—your eyes are covered with scales and you do your utmost to keep them there! You will not come to Christ that you might have life and, therefore, there is no star visible to you! There is not even the faintest rim of the new moon, much less is there any light of the sun shining upon you. You are in the dark and, at present, there is nothing to break through that darkness or to drive it away.

Worse still, *you fear future and eternal night*. I think I hear you say, "I am afraid, Sir, that I shall die in the dark." I trust not, I trust not, for I have something to say to you which, I hope, may be God's voice to pierce that darkness and disperse it! It would be an awful thing, certainly, to pass out of this world without a hope, and to take the last dread plunge into the unutterable blackness without so much as a single spark of light to guide you on your way. And, since you may die at any moment—(remember how our friend was taken away, two Sabbaths ago, just as he entered this House of Prayer)—since you may die at any moment, see to it that you do not die in the dark! You have but one little candle—do not waste even a fragment of it, but use every beam of light it gives you—

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return,"

but if that lamp is once quenched, then will you be forever beyond the reach of hope, for the Gospel is not preached in Hell—where your soul will be found if you die unforgiven! Here, mercy is offered to you, but pass away rejecting it and you have sealed your doom forever!

I am not going to dwell any longer upon the seamy side of my subject, because that might only increase your darkness. Yet I know that you would feel a kind of mournful satisfaction if I were to do so. Do I not remember how I read through the Book of Job and its blackest pages seemed suitable to me? How did I take to heart the language of Jeremiah in his Lamentations and how did I roll those unsavory morsels under my tongue again and again! But I rejoice to believe that it is to people in such a state as this that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is sent. Christ did not die to save the righteous, but to save the *unrighteous*! Salvation is not meant for men who are not lost, but for men who *are* lost! It is not because of your *riches* that Christ came, but because of your *poverty*—not because of your *worthiness*—but because of your *unworthiness*! He has not come because you do not need Him, but because you *do* need Him! And the more terrible your necessity, on account of the thick darkness in which your spirit is enshrouded, the more am I encouraged to believe that Jesus Christ has come to save YOU—yes, even *you*, for the text says—"To them that are in darkness, Show yourselves."

II. Now, secondly, I am going to REPEAT THE EXHORTATION of the text—"Show yourselves." What does that mean?

First, it means that *you are running away from Divine Justice* and that your wisest course will be to *go and deliver yourself up*. I have been thinking, several times this week, of that unhappy man who is believed

to have committed a murder and who has been going from place to place to escape detection. What a miserable week he must have spent! How he must have trembled every time anyone looked at him! The sight of a policeman must be terrifying, indeed, to him. I know not where he has been, nor apparently does anybody else, but he is seeking to hide himself from the officers of justice. There was a murderer, some time ago, who escaped for a time from those who were searching for him, but what a wretched life he lived while he was hiding! Now to any of you who are trying to hide away, thus, God says, "Show yourselves; come out of your hiding place."

"But what am I to do?" asks one. Give yourself up. "What? Give myself up to justice?" Yes, to Almighty Justice. Come and surrender yourself. Do you not know that you are not really hidden? God sees you wherever you are! There is no hiding away from Him! I might not ask you to give yourself up to your fellow man, but I do pray you guilty sinners, who do not like to think of sin and are trying to hide yourselves, to abandon that folly and come out and give yourselves up. "Give myself up to God?" you ask. Yes, that is the first thing for you to do—to submit yourself to God, to lie at His feet pleading for mercy! I have heard of one who found that his life was sought for on account of a frightful crime that he had committed. When it was announced that whoever would bring that man's head, even though he, himself, had been a traitor, he would be pardoned, he did a very sensible thing—he obtained admittance to the king and said, "I have brought this man's head and I demand to be pardoned, for I have complied with the condition mentioned in the proclamation." So he had, though it was his own head that he had brought and, somehow, the grim humor of the action seemed to touch the heart of the king, and he said, "Well, you must live."

I want you to do the same thing as that criminal did—come to God, and say, "Lord, I am a wicked sinner. If there is a man upon the earth who deserves to be cast away from Your Presence, forever, on account of sin, I am that guilty one." Deliver yourself up to God, surrender at discretion! Say, "You must do with me as You will, Lord, but I cannot run away from You, nor do I wish to do so. I know that all the earth is but one great prison when You are seeking me, for You can see me anywhere. You can spy me out in the darkest night and find me in my most secret hiding place—therefore I will deliver myself up into Your hands. Do with me as You will." Now then, you that are in the dark, come and deliver yourselves up! Say, as Esther did, when she resolved to go into the presence of Ahasuerus, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." I wish I might be privileged to bring you to that point! May the Lord, Himself, bring you there! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom God anointed to save sinners, I command you who are in darkness to show yourselves, by surrendering yourselves *now* to your God, submitting yourselves unreservedly to Him! "Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

The next way of showing yourselves is somewhat different—"Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves," that is, *you are very lonely and you have been avoiding your best friends*. You like to get away into a secluded corner and you do not care to be spoken to about religion—yet all the while you have the heartache and know not how to get it cured. To you who wish to be always alone, you who are so retiring, so nervous and so sensitive that you never speak to anybody about the sorrow you so keenly feel, thus says the Lord to you, "To them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." Come out of your retirement! If you cannot speak to any mortal man, yet speak to the Immortal Man, the Christ of God! Go and tell all your sorrows to the best of friends! You remember that we sang just now—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly."

O you lonely one, I want you to speak thus to Jesus and to fly to His bosom and tell Him all that ails you! You cannot speak to mother, you say, dear girl? Then speak to the Lord Jesus Christ! "Oh, I cannot speak to my father!" says the boy. No, I have often found that children cannot talk to their earthly father, but you can go and speak to the Lord Jesus Christ! He will meet you in your little room. He will be by your bedside tonight! Get somewhere, alone, and say to Him, "Lord Jesus, I have not a friend to whom I can go for relief. Perhaps there are many who would be my friends, but I am so frightened and so timid that I dare not go and speak to them. Even when I go to the Tabernacle, I am afraid lest someone should talk to me about my soul." Speak thus to the Lord Jesus, first, and it may be that He will give you courage to allow some Christian person to converse with you and help you "out of darkness into light." Even if you have not courage enough for that, it shall be an all-sufficient help to you to show yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Seek His acquaintance and if only like one groping in the dark you do but touch Him and lay hold of Him by faith, you will be saved! And in due time you will come forth into the light of His Countenance.

Thus I have given you two meanings of the text, but I want, now, to tell you another—"Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." This passage may be applied *to you who are sick, who are concealing your disease*. I want every man here who is troubled about the state of his heart, and every woman, too, to come and show themselves to Christ, just as they are, in all their sin. I remember a friend of mine who was, for years, suffering from an ailment that I need not name. And after a while his malady reached a very sad condition and he was most seriously ill. A physician was called in and when he had examined my friend, he said, "This ought to have been seen to years ago! Why was it not properly attended to before? Have you no doctor?" "Oh, yes! The doctor has been in and out of the house many times. He has been here almost every month." "Well, what did he do for you?" "Oh, he prescribed, different things."

Then the physician asked, "But did he never examine you to find out what was the matter?" And my friend replied, "Oh, I always shrank from a medical examination!" "But," rejoined the physician, "you will soon be dead unless God deals very graciously with you—and if you had been ex-

amined and rightly treated, a few years ago, probably this mischief was then such a very small affair that your life might have been saved."

Do you not think that such a thing as that often happens—that we are afraid of a thorough examination and do not want to know our real condition—and, therefore, it continues to get worse? Well now, I want you who are in darkness to come to God and to say to Him, "Lord, examine me thoroughly." Go and exhibit to the Lord your sins and your sores, yes, though they are putrefying sores! He is accustomed to seeing such things, therefore hide nothing from Him. Go and tell Him the tale of all your sins and your sorrows. In your prayers to Him, make a full confession of your sin. I remember one who used to pray, "Lord, pardon my sin," and he went over a list of a number of sins that he had *not* committed—but he used to say very little about those that he *had* committed! "I am afraid I take a little drop too much," he would sometimes confess, but he never obtained peace until he said straight out, "Lord, I am a hard drinker, I am a drunk—but by Your Grace I will take no more strong drink." Then he was delivered from the evil!

If I were a priest and you were fools enough to come and confess your sins to me, I would not ask you to call a spade a spade, for some spades are better called by another name—but when you go to God, pour out all that is in your heart, confess all your wrong-doing! Acknowledge that you are proud and conceited! Admit that you are murmuring and rebellious! Confess that you do not want to be converted! Acknowledge that you have companions you would not like to give up! Confess that you are living in the practice of a secret sin! Admit it all! Show yourselves, exhibit yourselves to God just as you are! It will be a dreadful sight, but the Great Physician will then operate upon you with His wonderful power which cures and cleanses, too! Remember this text, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You who are in darkness, show yourselves to God by a full and wholehearted confession of your sin—and a humble acknowledgment that you deserve to suffer His righteous wrath!

Thus I hope I have, in another sense, put this matter plainly enough—

"Say to them that are in darkness,
Show yourselves."

The next thing you have to do is to show yourselves *as healed ones bound to confess Him who has cured them.* If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are healed of the leprosy of sin! If you trust Christ, your sins are forgiven—but remember that this is the *full* Gospel message—"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." When the 10 lepers were cleansed, our Lord Jesus Christ said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priest," in order that he might examine and see whether it was a real cure that had been worked, and so might bear testimony that Christ had healed the leprosy.

Now, if Christ has saved you, you are required to come out and show yourself! Come to the Church of God, and ask to be admitted to its fel-

lowship. "Oh but I mean to go to Heaven in the dark!" Do you? Do you expect to find a dark Heaven when you get there? "But," says one, "there are a great many secret Christians!" How do you know that there are? Did you ever know one? "Yes," says somebody, "I remember one." But, if you knew him, how could he be a *secret* Christian? I do not know whether there ever was a secret Christian! I will not say anything about that matter because I am out of the secret in such a case as that, but this I know, *nobody has a right to be a secret Christian*. Our Lord Jesus said, "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." "Lord," says one, "I am Your disciple, but I am going to take it easy on the sofa." "No," says Christ, "that kind of life will not do for one of My disciples, for he that takes not his cross and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me." You who were in darkness, if Christ has brought you into light, show yourselves! Stand forward and say, "Here is a proof of what the Grace of God has done—

'I am the chief of sinners,
Yet Jesus died for me'"

and I desire to come out boldly and publicly to acknowledge what He has done for me! It is the very least that I can do to show my gratitude to Him."

I have sometimes called some of you, who say you love Christ, but do not confess Him before men, "rats behind the wainscot." You just come out, as it were, to nibble a bit of cheese, and then go back, again, into the darkness. But is that the way that a Christian man or woman ought to act?—

"Jesus! And shall it always be?
A mortal man ashamed of Thee!"

No! Let it not be so! You who have been brought out of the darkness, show yourselves and confess your Savior and your Lord!

But I am going to carry the text a little farther. There are some young men here, perhaps some young women, also, who have been saved. They are no longer in the dark and God has given them Grace and talents—yet still they are hiding themselves away! They are *chosen ones loath to take their place of service*. Remember when Saul was elected king, the people could not find him. He was a fine tall fellow, who stood head and shoulders above the rest of his countrymen, and though they ought to have spied him out even if he had been sitting down, they could not find him. Where was he? Hidden away among the stuff. He did not appear to like that idea of being king, so he hid himself away, and the people cried, "Come out, Saul! Come out!" And they brought him forth and proclaimed him king.

There are certain Brothers and Sisters whom God means to place where they do not want to be placed. There is one who ought to be a Sunday school teacher, but he is not willing. Where is he? Come out, Sir, come out! I must fetch you out from among the stuff. "Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." There is a young fellow who ought to be preaching the Gospel—he made a very pretty speech, the other night, at the Mutual Improvement Society. He can speak well enough as a politician and if there were an election, we would find him talking fast

enough. But he is dumb so far as the Church of Christ is concerned! Come out, Brother! If the Lord has saved you and if He is pleading for you in Heaven, it is time you began to plead for Him on earth! Perhaps it is for the mission-field that the Master wants you and, my Brother, my Sister, if it is so, the message of the Lord comes to you tonight, "You that are in darkness, hiding yourselves away, Show yourselves."

And, mark you, our text also applies to *persecuted ones who shall be acknowledged and honored of God.* There will come a day when God's people, who have long been in the dark through persecution, slander and misrepresentation, shall hear the Lord speaking to them out of Heaven, and saying, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." "Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." What a change will come for God's poor despised people in that day! "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." And, "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." Oh, I know that they sneer at you and call you names—"a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a cant, a hypocrite." Stand fast for Christ and the day will come when He shall say, "You that are in darkness, Show yourselves."

Lastly, these words also relate to *dead ones called to resurrection.* It may be that most of us shall go down to the grave before Christ comes and we shall lie—

"In beds of dust and silent clay,"

and leave these poor bodies of ours in some cemetery or other. Perhaps in the depths of the sea, or far away in New Zealand, or in the United States or Canada, we shall leave our bones far from the spot where our fathers sleep. But there shall come a day when the silver trumpet of the Resurrection Morning shall sound and this shall be its note, "You that are in darkness, Show yourselves!" And out from the dark we shall come, the redeemed of the Lord, in Resurrection Glory! In the prospect of that day, I feel that I must show myself for my Lord *now*—I must come to the front and bear the brunt of the battle for the Truth of God! I must be bold for Christ, for He has brought me out of darkness into His marvelous Light and He deserves that I should not shrink away and hide myself!

He who has prepared a crown of life for every faithful one, expects that you and I will be faithful even unto death, in the hope of obtaining that crown of life which fades not! Up, up, you who are hiding yourselves! Come out of the bushes in which you are skulking away! If Jehovah is God, serve Him! If Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God, acknowledge Him! If the Gospel is worth preaching, proclaim it with trumpet tongue! If the Church of God is for Him, be numbered with it and take your part in its service and in its suffering! God help you, and God bless you by this message which seems to me to come direct from Himself to you! You that are in sorrow, show yourselves! And all you that are cowardly, show yourselves! And God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 49:1-17.

In this chapter, we have not merely Isaiah speaking concerning the Christ of God, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who here speaks concerning Himself.

Verse 1. *Listen, O isles, unto Me; and hearken, you people from far.* It is very remarkable how constantly the isles are spoken of in this Book of Isaiah, as if it had been foreseen that, in these far-off islands of the sea, the name of Jesus would be greatly magnified. "Listen," says the Messiah, "O isles, unto Me; and hearken, you people, from far."

1. *The LORD has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother has He made mention of My name.* Christ Jesus our Lord was spoken of by the Spirit of prophecy from His very birth—and long before it—and when He did come into the world, and was born of the Virgin Mary, the stars of Heaven spoke concerning Him and guided the wise men from the East to the place where the young Child lay.

2. *And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword.* There are no words anywhere so piercing as the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you are giving quotations from various authors, you need never write the name, "Jesus," at the bottom of any of *His* words, for they proclaim their own origin. "Never man spoke like this Man."

2. *In the shadow of His hand has He hid Me and made Me a polished shaft. In His quiver has He hid Me.* The great weapon of God against sin is His Son, Jesus Christ! God has no such means of smiting evil, or effecting His purposes of love as His own dear Son! This is the "polished shaft" which Jehovah delights to use.

3. *And said unto Me, You are My Servant.* Above all others, Christ is the Servant of God. He is a Son by nature, a Servant by His condescension, a Servant for our sakes.

3. *O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* It is very wonderful that the Redeemer should here be called, "Israel." It is not more wonderful, however, than that in another place His people should be called by His name! You remember those two passages in the prophecy of Jeremiah—"This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." and, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness." There, the people of God take their Lord's name! And here, Christ takes the name of His people and He deigns to be called Israel. Nor is this an unsuitable name for Him, for it is He who wrestled on our behalf and prevailed, even as Israel did at Jabbok. Jesus is a greater Prince with God than Jacob ever was! Well, then, does Jehovah say to Him, "You are My Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

4. *Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for naught, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God.* The Messiah, prophetically looking forward, complained that, during His life on earth, He seemed to labor in vain. The nation was not saved—"He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He wept over the guilty city of Jerusalem, but those tears did not put out the fires of vengeance! He entreated men to turn to God, but they did not and they would not repent. He seemed to labor in vain and spend His strength for nothing, and in vain.

5. *And now, says the LORD that formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and My God shall be My strength.* Even though the Jewish nation was not yet gathered to Christ, His labor was not in vain. God will not suffer His Son to spend His strength for nothing!

6. *And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth.* What a blessed word of cheer this is for us poor Gentiles! The favored children of Israel thought us to be little better than dogs. But, behold, we have been lifted up into the children's place! If Israel is not gathered, the Messiah has become a light to the Gentiles, and God's salvation unto the ends of the earth! Yet we cannot help fervently praying, "Oh, that Israel might soon be gathered to Christ!" Her gathering in will be the time of the fullness of the Gentiles.

7. *Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors.* Who is this but our Divine Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God? These words are spoken of Him whom man despised, of Him who was despised and rejected of men, of Him whom the nation abhors, for that favored nation still, alas, abhors the name of Jesus of Nazareth and will not cherish towards the Christ anything but thoughts of contempt!

7. *To the Servant of rulers.* For, though He was the King of kings, and Lord of lords, He submitted to be a Servant to the kings of the earth and obeyed the rules of human governors. Yet—

7. *Kings shall see and arise, princes, also, shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You.* The day is coming when He that was spit upon shall be the admired of all mankind! No more the crown of thorns, but many diadems of Glory shall rest upon His blessed head! And *all men*, with loud acclaim, shall salute Him as King of kings and Lord of lords!

8. *Thus says the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard You, and in a day of salvation have I helped You; and I will preserve You, and give You for a Covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.* It is the Lord Jesus Christ who shall establish all that is good—and cast down everything that is evil. He shall staunch earth's bleeding wounds and repair her wilderness wastes. Where He comes, flowers spring up all around His blessed feet!

9. *That You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.* When Christ leads His flock, wherever they go they shall feed. And even if He leads them to the very tops of the hills, He shall make the pastures grow there for them! There is never a place where Christ leads us but what it is safe for us to go there. The Shepherd's feet make pasturage for the sheep that follow Him—therefore, be not afraid to go wherever He leads you, but rather rejoice that He puts

forth His own sheep and goes before them, for—"they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places."

10, 11. *They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them. And I will make all My mountains a way.* Where, naturally, there could not be a way, on those pathless summits of the loftiest Alps, the Lord says, "I will make all My mountains a way"—

11. *And My highways shall be exalted.* "I will throw up causeways." God will make a way for you to get at Him if you want to get at Him! If you are willing to make a way for God, He will make a way for you! The gulf shall be bridged, the mountain shall be leveled!

12. *Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.* "The land of Sinim" signifies China. Is it not strange that, in this Book, we should find mention of the land of Sinim, the country of China? God has a people there and they shall come to Him! I was delighted, last Tuesday, to meet with a Brother who had broken bread with us at the Lord's Table—he was a poor Chinaman, so he had helped to fulfill this *prophecy—"These shall come from the west; and these from the land of Sinim."*

13-15. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.* Will God ever forget His ancient people, the Jews? Never! They forget their God, but Jehovah never forgets His chosen people—"They may forget, yet will I not forget you."

16. *Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.* "I cannot work, I cannot even open the palm of My hands without seeing the names of my chosen people—'I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.'"

16, 17. *Your walls are continually before Me. Your children shall make haste; your destroyers and they that made you waste shall go away from you.* For God is full of kindness to His people, and cannot forget them. Oh, that they would never forget Him!

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.

MEDIATION OF MOSES
NO. 2398

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 17, 1887.

"And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." Exodus 32:14.

I SUPPOSE that I need not say that this verse speaks after the manner of men. I do not know after what other manner we can speak. To speak of God after the manner of God is reserved for God, Himself, and mortal men could not comprehend such speech. In this sense, the Lord often speaks, not according to literal fact, but according to the appearance of *things to us*, in order that we may understand so far as the human can comprehend the Divine. The Lord's purposes never really change. His eternal will must forever be the same, for He cannot alter, since He would either have to alter for the better or for the worse. He cannot change for the better, for He is infinitely good—it were blasphemous to suppose that He could change for the worse. He who sees all things at once and perceives at one glance the beginning and the end of all things, has no need to repent. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent," but, in the course of His action, there appears to us to be, sometimes, a great change, and as we say of the sun that it rises and sets, though it does not actually do so, and we do not deceive when we speak after that fashion, so we say concerning God, in the language of the text, "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." It appears to us to be so and it is so in the act of God, yet this statement casts no doubt upon the great and glorious Doctrine of the Immutability of God.

Speaking after the manner of men, the mediation of Moses worked this change in the mind of God. God *in* Moses seemed to overcome God *out of* Moses. God in the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus, appears to be stronger for mercy than God apart from the Mediator. This saying of our text is very amazing and it deserves our most earnest and careful consideration.

Just think, for a minute, of Moses up there in the serene solitude with God. He had left the tents of Israel down below and he had passed within the mystic circle of fire where none may come but he who is specially invited. And there, alone with God, Moses had a glorious season of fellowship with the Most High. He lent his listening ear to the instructions of the Almighty concerning the priesthood, the tabernacle and the altar. And he was enjoying a profound peace of mind, when, all of a sudden, he was startled. The whole tone of the speech of the Lord seemed changed, and He said to Moses, "Go, get you down; for your people, which you

brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." I can hardly imagine what thoughts passed through the great leader's mind! How Moses must have trembled in the Presence of God! All the joy that he had experienced seemed suddenly to vanish, leaving behind, however, somewhat of the strength which always comes out of fellowship with God. This Moses now needed, if ever he needed it in all his life, for this was the crucial period in the history of Moses! This was his severest trial, when, alone with God on the mountain's brow, he was called to come out of the happy serenity of his spirit and to hear the voice of an angry God, saying, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them."

The language of God was very stern, and well it might be after all that He had done for that people! When the song of Miriam had scarcely ceased. When you might almost hear the echoes of that jubilant note, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea," you might quickly have heard a very different cry, "Up, make us gods!" And, in the presence of the calf that Aaron made, the same people blasphemously exclaimed, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Such a prostitution of their tongues to horrid blasphemies against Jehovah! Such a turning aside from the Truth of God to the most gross of falsehoods, might well provoke the anger of a righteously jealous God!

It is noteworthy that Moses did not lose himself in this moment of trial. We read at once, "And Moses besought Jehovah, his God." He was undoubtedly a man of prayer, but he must have been continually in the spirit of prayer, or else I could conceive of him, at that moment, falling on his face and lying there in silent horror! I could imagine him flying down the mountain in a passionate haste to see what the people had done—but it is delightful to find that he did neither of these two things—rather he began to pray! Oh, Friends, if we *habitually* pray, we shall know how to pray when praying times become more pressing than usual! The man who is to wrestle with the angel must have been familiar with angels beforehand! You cannot go into your chamber, shut the door and begin a mighty intercessory prayer if you have never been to the Mercy Seat before! No, Moses is "the man of God." You remember that he left us a prayer, in the 90th Psalm, bearing this title, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." There is no man of God if there is no prayer, for prayer makes the man into "the man of God." So, instinctively, though startled and saddened to the last degree, Moses is on his knees, beseeching the Lord, his God.

I. This, then, is the scene I have to bring before you, and my first observation shall be that NOTHING CAN HINDER A TRULY LOVING SPIRIT FROM PLEADING FOR THE OBJECTS OF ITS LOVE.

There were many things that might have hindered Moses from making intercessory prayer and the first was, *the startling greatness of the people's sin*. God Himself put it to Moses in strong language. He said, "The people have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These

are your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

This terrible accusation from the mouth of God, spoken as God would speak it, must have impressed Moses greatly with the awful character of Israel's sin, for, farther on, we find Moses saying to God, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold." It has happened to you, I suppose, as it has to me, that in the sight of a great sin one has almost hesitated to pray about it. The person sinned so wantonly, under circumstances so peculiarly grievous, transgressed so willfully and so altogether without excuse that you felt thrust back from the Mercy Seat and from pleading for such a sinner! But it was not so with Moses. Idolatry is a horrible sin, yet Moses is not kept back from pleading for its forgiveness. It astounds him—his own wrath waxes hot against it—but still, there he is, pleading for the transgressors!

What else can he do but pray? And he does it after the best possible fashion. Oh, let us never say, when we see great sin, "I am appalled by it! I cannot pray about it. I am sickened by it, I loathe it." Sometime ago we had revelations of the most infamous criminality in this great city which we cannot, even now, quite forget, and I must confess that I sometimes felt as if I could not pray for some of the wretches who sinned so foully. But we must shake off that kind of feeling and, even in the presence of the most atrocious iniquity, we must still say, "I will even pray for these Jerusalem sinners, that God may deliver them from the bondage of their sin."

A second thing that might have hindered Moses was not only the sin, but *the manifest obstinacy of those who had committed the sin.* Moses had it upon the evidence of the heart-searching God that these people were exceedingly perverse. The Lord said, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people." Poor Moses had to learn, in later years, how true that saying was, for though he poured out his very soul for them and was tender towards them as a nurse with a child, yet they often vexed and wearied his spirit so that he cried to the Lord, "Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that You should say unto me, Carry them in your bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child, unto the land which You swore unto their fathers?" He was crushed beneath the burden of Israel's perversity, yet, though God, Himself, had told him that they were a stiff-necked people, Moses besought the Lord concerning these obstinate sinners!

Then, thirdly, the prayer of Moses might have been hindered by *the greatness of God's wrath,* yet he said, "Lord, why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people?" Shall I pray for the man with whom God is angry? Shall I dare to be an intercessor with God who is righteously wrathful? Why, some of us scarcely pray to the merciful God in this Gospel dispensation in which He is so full of goodness and long-suffering! There are some who profess to be God's people who make but very little intercession for the ungodly. I am afraid that if they had seen God angry, they would have said, "It is of no use to pray for those idolaters! God is not unjustly angry. He knows what He does and I must leave the matter there." But mighty love dares to cast itself upon its face before even an

angry God! It dares to plead with Him and to ask Him, "Why does Your wrath wax hot?" although it knows the reason and lays no blame upon the Justice of God! Yes, love and faith together bring such a holy daring into the hearts of men of God that they can go into the Presence of the King of kings, and cast themselves down before Him even when He is in His wrath, and say, "O God, spare Your people; have mercy upon those with whom You are justly angry!"

Perhaps it is an even more remarkable thing that Moses was not hindered from praying to God though, to a large degree at the time, and much more afterwards, *he sympathized with God in His wrath*. We have read how Moses' anger waxed hot when he saw the calf and the dancing—do you not see the holy man dashing the precious tablets upon the earth, regarding them as too sacred for the unholy eyes of idolaters to gaze upon? He saves them, as it were, from the desecration of contact with such a guilty people by breaking them to shivers upon the ground! Can you not see how his eyes flash fire as he tears down their idol, burns it in the fire, grinds it to powder, strews it upon the water and makes them drink it? He is determined that it shall go into their very bowels—they shall be made to know what kind of a thing it was that they called a god!

He was exceedingly angry with Aaron, and when he bade the sons of Levi draw the sword of vengeance and slay the audacious rebels, his wrath was fiercely hot, and rightly so! Yet he prays for the guilty people. Oh, never let your indignation against sin prevent your prayers for sinners! If the tempest comes on and your eyes flash lightning, and your lips speak thunderbolts, yet let the silver drops of pitying tears fall down your cheeks—and pray the Lord that the blessed shower may be acceptable to Himself—especially when you plead for Jesus' sake! Nothing can stop the true lover of men's souls from pleading for them! No, not even our burning indignation against infamous iniquity! We see it and our blood boils at the sight, yet we betake ourselves to our knees and cry, "God be merciful to these great sinners, and pardon them, for Jesus' sake!"

A still greater hindrance to the prayer of Moses than those I have mentioned was *God's request for the pleading to cease*. The Lord, Himself, said to the intercessor, "Let Me alone." Oh, Friends, I fear that you and I would have thought that it was time to leave off praying when the Lord, with whom we were pleading, said, "Let Me alone: let Me alone." But I believe that Moses prayed the more earnestly because of that apparent rebuff. Under the cover of that expression, if you look closely into it, you will see that Moses' prayer was really prevailing with God. Even before he had uttered it, while it was only being formed in his soul, Jehovah felt the force of it, otherwise He would not have said, "Let Me alone."

And Moses appeared to gain courage from that which might have checked a less earnest suppliant—he seemed to say to himself, "Evidently God feels the force of my strong desires and I will, therefore, wrestle with Him until I prevail" It was a real rebuff and was, doubtless, intended by the Lord to be the test of the patience, the perseverance, the confidence, the self-denying love of Moses. Jehovah says, "Let Me alone,

that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." But Moses will not let Him alone! O, you who love the Lord, give Him no rest until He saves men! And though He should seem to say to you, "Let Me alone," do not let Him alone, for He wishes you to be importunate with Him, like that widow was with the unjust judge! The wicked man granted the poor woman's request because of her continual coming—and God is testing and trying you to see whether you really mean your prayers. He will keep you waiting a while, and even seem to repulse you, that you may, with an undaunted courage, say, "I will approach You! I will break through all obstacles to get to You. Even if it is not according to the law, I will go in unto the King of kings and if I perish, I perish! I will pray for sinners even if I perish in the act."

And, dear Friends, there is one thing more that might have hindered the prayer of Moses. I want to bring this all out, that you may see how tender-hearted love will pray in spite of every difficulty. *Moses prayed against his own personal interests*, for Jehovah said to him, "Let Me alone, that I may consume them." And then, looking with a glance of wondrous satisfaction upon His faithful servant, He said, "I will make of *you* a great nation." What an opportunity for an ambitious man! Moses may become the founder of a great nation if he wills! You know how men and women, in those old days, panted to be the progenitors of innumerable peoples and looked upon it as the highest honor of mortal men that their seed should fill the earth. Here is the opportunity for Moses to become the father of a nation that God will bless! All the benedictions of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are to be met in Moses and his seed! But no, he will not have it so. He turns to God and cries to Him to bless the sinful people! It seems as if he passed over the offer that God made, *sub silentio*, as we say. Leaving it in utter silence, he cries, "Spare Your people and bless Your heritage."

II. Now I introduce to you a second thought, which is that NOTHING CAN DEPRIVE A LOVING SPIRIT OF ITS ARGUMENTS IN PRAYER FOR OTHERS.

It is one thing to be willing to besiege the Throne of Grace, but it is quite another thing to get the ammunition of prayer. Sometimes you cannot pray, for prayer means the pleading of arguments, and there are times when arguments fail you—when you cannot think of any reason why you should pray. Now there was no argument in these people, nothing that Moses could see in them that he could plead with God for them—so he turned his eyes another way—he looked to God and *pleaded what he saw in Him!*

His first argument was, that the *Lord had made them His people.* He said, "Lord, why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people?" The Lord had said to Moses, "Get you down, for your people have corrupted themselves." "No," says Moses, "they are not *my* people—they are Your people." It was a noble, "retort courteous," as it were, upon the Ever-Blessed One. "In Your wrath You call them *my* people, but You know that they are none of mine—they are Yours—You did choose their fathers and You did enter into Covenant with them. And I remind You that they are Your chosen ones, the objects of Your love and mercy and, therefore, O Lord,

because they are Yours, will You not bless them?" Oh, use that argument in *your* supplications! If you cannot say of a sinner that he is God's chosen, at least you can say that he is God's *creature* and, therefore, use that plea, "O God, suffer not Your creature to perish!"

Next, Moses pleads that *the Lord had done great things for them*, for he says, "Why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people, which You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?" "I never brought Israel out of Egypt," says Moses, "how could I have done it? I did not divide the Red Sea! I did not smite Pharaoh! You have done it, O Lord! You, alone, have done it and if You have done all this, will You not finish what You have begun?" This was grand pleading on the part of Moses and I do not wonder that it prevailed! Now, if you see any sign of Grace, any token of God's work in the heart, plead it with the Lord. Say, "You have done so much, O Lord. Be pleased to do the rest and let these people be saved with Your everlasting salvation!"

Then Moses goes on to mention, in the next place, that *the Lord's name would be compromised if Israel should be destroyed*. He says, "Why should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth"? If God's people are not saved, if Christ does not see of the travail of His soul, the majesty of God and the honor of the Redeemer will be compromised. Shall Christ die to no purpose? Shall the Gospel be preached in vain? Shall the Holy Spirit be poured out without avail? Let us plead thus with God and we shall not be short of arguments that we may urge with Him.

Moses goes on to mention that *God was in Covenant with these people*. See how he puts it in the 13th verse—"Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own Self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." There is no pleading with God like reminding Him of His Covenant! Get a hold of a promise of God, and you may pray with great boldness, for the Lord will not run back from His own Word—but get a hold of the Covenant and you may plead with the greatest possible confidence! If I may compare a single promise to one great gun in the heavenly siege-train, then the Covenant may be likened to a whole park of artillery—with that you may besiege Heaven and come off a conqueror! Moses pleads thus with the Lord—"How can You destroy these people, even though You are angry with them, and they deserve Your wrath? You have promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their seed shall inherit the land, and if they are destroyed, how can they enter into Canaan and possess it?" This is grand pleading! But what bravery it was when Moses dared to say to God, "Remember Your Covenant and turn from Your fierce anger, and repent of Your thoughts of evil against Your people"! O Lord, teach us, also, how to plead like this!

Nor was Moses without another argument, the most wonderful of all! If you read in the next chapter, at the 16th verse, you will notice how Moses says to God, in effect, "*I cannot be parted from these people*! With them I will live. With them I will die. If you blot their name out of Your Book,

blot out my name, also. If Your Presence goes not with me, carry us not up from here. For how will it be known, here, that I and Your people have found Grace in Your sight? Is it not in that You go with us?" See how he puts it—"*I and Your people*...You go with *us*." "No," says Moses, "I will not be favored—I will sink or swim with these people." And I think that this is how the Lord Jesus Christ pleads for His Church when He is interceding with God. "My Father," He says, "I must have My people. My Church is My bride, and I, the Bridegroom, cannot lose My spouse. I will die for her and if I live, she must also live. And if I rise to Glory, she must be brought to Glory with Me."

You see, it is, "I and Your people." This is the glorious conjunction of Christ with us as it was of Moses with the children of Israel! And, Brothers and Sisters, we never prevail in prayer so much as when we seem to link ourselves with the people for whom we pray. You cannot stand up above them, as though you were their superior, and then pray for them with any success—you must get down by the side of the sinner and say, "Let us plead with God." Sometimes, when you are preaching to people, or when you are praying for them, you must feel as if you could *die* for them, if they might be saved, and if they were lost it would seem as if you, too, had lost everything! Rutherford said that he would have two heavens if but one soul from Anwoth met him at God's right hand, and, doubtless, we shall have the same, and we have sometimes felt as if we had a Hell at the thought of any of our Hearers being cast into Hell! When you can pray like that, when you put yourself side by side with the soul for which you are pleading, you will succeed! You will be like Elisha, when he stretched himself upon the Shunammite's son and put his mouth upon the child's mouth, his eyes upon the child's eyes, his hands upon the child's hands and seemed to identify himself with the dead child. Then was he made the means of quickening to the lad! God help us to plead thus in our prayers for sinners!

There is one other thing which I think has hardly ever been noticed, and that is the way in which Moses finished his prayer by pleading *the Sovereign Mercy of the Lord*. When you are pleading with a man, it is sometimes a very wise thing to stop your own pleading and let the man, himself, speak, and then out of his own mouth get your argument. When Moses pleaded with God for the people, he had, at first, only half an answer. And he turned round to the Lord and said, "You have favored me, and promised me great things. Now I ask something more of You. 'I beseech You, show me Your Glory.'" I do not think that was idle curiosity on the part of Moses, but that he meant to use it as the great master-plea in prayer. When the Lord said to him, "I will make all My goodness pass before you," I think I see the tears in the eyes of Moses and I seem to hear him say, "He cannot smite the people. He cannot destroy them! He is going to make all His goodness pass before me and I know what that is—Infinite Love, Infinite Mercy—mercy that endures forever."

And then, when the Lord said, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," how the heart of Moses must have leaped within him as he said, "There it is! That glorious Truth of Divine

Sovereignty! The Lord will show mercy on whom He will show mercy. Why, then, He can have mercy on these wicked wretches who have been making a god out of a calf and bowing before it!" I do delight, sometimes, to fall back upon the Sovereignty of God and say, "Lord, here is a wicked wretch. I cannot see any reason why you should save him! I can see many reasons why you should damn him, but then You do as You will. Oh, magnify Your Sovereign Grace by saving this great sinner! Let men see what a mighty King You are and how royally You handle the silver scepter of Your pardoning mercy."

That is a grand argument, for it gives God all the Glory! It puts Him upon the Throne, it acknowledges that He is an absolute Sovereign who is not to be dictated to, or held in with bonds and cords. Shall He not do as He wills with His own? We need to often listen to the sublime Truth that thunders out from the Throne of God, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." Out of this Truth of God comes the best plea that ever trembles on a pleader's lips. "Great King, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, have mercy upon us! Divine Sovereign, exercise Your gracious dispensing power and let the guilty rebels live!"

III. Now, in the third place, let me say that NOTHING CAN HINDER A PLEADING SPIRIT OF SUCCESS. The text says, "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people."

If you and I know how to plead for sinners, there is no reason why we should not succeed, for, first, there is no reason *in the Character of God*. Try, if you can, to got some idea of what God is, and though you tremble before His Sovereignty and adore His Holiness and magnify His Justice, remember that He is still, first and foremost, Love. "God is love," and that love shines in all the Divine attributes! It is undiminished in its glory by any one of them. All the attributes of God are harmonious with each other and Love seems to be the very center of the circle. Let us never be afraid of pleading with God! He will never take it ill on our part that we pray for sinners, for it is so much after His own mind. "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." The Character of God is infinitely gracious, even in its Sovereignty. It is Grace that reigns, therefore let us never be afraid of pleading with the Lord! We shall surely succeed, for there is nothing in God's Character to hinder us.

And, next, there is nothing *in God's thoughts to hinder the pleader's success*. Look at the text—"The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." I will, therefore, never be hindered in my pleading by any idea of the Divine purpose, whatever that purpose may be! There are some who have dreaded what they call, "the horrible Decrees of God." No Divine Decree is horrible to me! And it shall never hinder me in pleading with the Lord for the salvation of men. He is God and, therefore, let Him do what seems good to Him—absolute authority is safe enough in His hands. But even if He had thought to do evil to His people, there is no reason why we should cease from praying! We may yet suc-

ceed, for so the text has it, "Jehovah repented of the evil, which He thought to do unto His people."

I will go yet farther, and say that there is nothing, even, *in God's act* to hinder us from pleading with success. If God has begun to smite the sinner, as long as that sinner is in this world, I will still pray for him. Remember, how, when the fiery rain was falling upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the vile cities of the plain were being covered with its bituminous sleet, Zoar was preserved in answer to the prayers of Lot? Look at David—he was a great sinner, and he had brought upon his people a terrible plague, and the destroying angel stood with his drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem—but when David saw the angel, he said to the Lord, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done?" So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel. Why, if I saw you between the very jaws of Hell, so long as they had not actually engulfed you, I would pray for you! God forbid that we should sin against any guilty ones by ceasing to pray for them, however desperate their case! My text seems to me to put this matter with astonishing force and power—the evil which God had thought to do was prevented by the intercession of His servant, Moses.

IV. I had many more things to say to you, but I must leave them unsaid and conclude by reminding you, in only a sentence or two, that NOTHING IN THE MEDIATION OF MOSES CAN MATCH OUR GREATER INTERCESSOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that He not only prayed and willingly offered Himself to die for us, but *He actually died for us*. His name was blotted from the book of the living—He died that we might live. He went not to God saying, "Perhaps I may make Atonement for the guilty," but *He made the Atonement and His pleading for sinners is perpetually prevalent*. God is hearing Christ at this moment as He makes intercession for the transgressors! And He is giving Him to see of the travail of His soul. This being the case, nothing ought to prevent any sinner from pleading for himself through Jesus Christ! If you think that God means to destroy you, yet go and pray to Him, for "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." Thus may He deal in mercy with you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 32.

Verse 1. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, 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.* What a terrible speech to be made by the people whom God had chosen to be His own! "Make us gods. Make our creator." How could that be?

2. *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.* Poor Aaron! He never had the backbone of his brother,

Moses. He was a better speaker, but oh, the poverty of his heart! He yields to the will of these idolatrous people and bows to their wicked behests at once!

3. *And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.* Idolaters spare no expense—there is many a worshipper of a god of wood or mud who gives more to that idol than professing Christians give to the cause of the one living and true God! It is sad that it should be so.

4. *And he received them at their hands and fashioned it with an engraving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.* This was an Egyptian idolatry, the worship of God under the fashion of an ox, the emblem of strength. But God is not to be worshipped under emblems at all! What a poor representation of God any emblem must be!

5. *And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.* They were going to worship Jehovah under the emblem of an ox! This is what you will hear idolaters say—they *do not worship the image*, they say, but the true God under that image! Yet that is expressly forbidden under the Second Commandment!

6. *And they rose up early on the morrow and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* Lascivious games were sure to accompany idolatrous worship, for idolatry always leads to filthiness in some form or other, as if it were inevitable!

7. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get you down; for your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.* How startled Moses must have been when Jehovah said this to him!

8, 9. *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These are your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people.* Moses, perhaps, begins to lift his voice in prayer, and God says—

10. *Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation.* "I will keep My promise to Abraham by destroying these rebels, and taking you, his true descendant, and fulfilling the Covenant in you."

11-13. *And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people, which You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own Self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and you shall inherit it forever.* What a brave prayer this was! Here is a wrestling Moses—true son of wrestling Israel—and he

brings his arguments to bear upon Jehovah when He is angry! And, by God's Grace, he succeeds in turning aside the Lord's wrath!

14, 15. *And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount.* An unhappy, broken-hearted man, going from the closest communion with *God*, down into the midst of a wicked people!

15-17. *And the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand: the tablets were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tablets were the Work of God, and the writing was the Writing of God, engraved upon the tablets. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.* Joshua had probably waited lower down and he met Moses in his descent. He heard with the quick ears of a soldier and his thoughts went that way.

18, 19. *And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.* This is he who had been praying to God and saying, "Why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people?" Now he is in deep sympathy with God and he is, himself, angry with the idolaters. He cannot help it when he begins to see their sin. Before, he had only thought of the people, but now he *looks at their sin.* When you see sin, if you are a man of God, your wrath waxes hot and you get into sympathy with that Holy God who cannot be otherwise than indignant at iniquity wherever it may be.

20. *And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.* See the power of this one man who has God at his back and God in him! While the people are dancing around their idol, he tears it down, grinds it to powder and says, "You shall drink it, every one of you." Why, there are millions to one—but what cares he about their millions? God is with him and he is God's servant and, therefore, they all tremble before him!

21-24. *And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto you, that you have brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: you know the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, 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. And I said unto them, Whoever has any gold, let them break it off so they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.* That was a lie, for he had made the calf and shaped it himself. Aaron had not any backbone, nor any principle—he could not be stout-hearted for God! What a poor little man he seems by the side of his great brother! How he shrivels up under the rebuke of Moses!

25. *And when Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies).* Moses does not

spare Aaron. He lays at his door the guilt of the great sin he had committed—"Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies."

26, 27. *Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man, his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.* This is the man who pleaded for them on the top of the mount! See how he acts in the sight of their sin, by Divine Authority! He smites them right and left. Possibly, those who were slain were the men who refused to drink the water on which the powder had been sprinkled, or those who continued in rebellion against the Lord.

28-30. *And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, You have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up unto the LORD; perhaps I shall make an atonement for your sin.* I will be bound to say that this was said after a sleepless night. The people's sin is now so vividly before him that he begins to feel that God will be just if He punishes them and does not grant them any forgiveness. So he goes, once more, up that steep climb to the top of Sinai with a trembling heart—and with only a, "perhaps," on his lip.

31, 32. *And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—* There he broke down, he could not finish that sentence!

32. *And if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your Book which You have written.* "Let me die in their place!" But God could not accept one *man* in the place of another! There is a great Substitute, ordained of old, but He is more than man and, therefore, He *can* stand in the sinner's place.

33-36. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My Book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto you: behold, My Angel shall go before you: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.* Moses had only half success in pleading for the people. They were not to die as yet, but God declared that He would visit their sin upon them.

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.

"YOUR FIRST LOVE"
NO. 2399

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 20, 1887.

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the LORD, 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.'"
Jeremiah 2:2.

THIS was the Word of Jehovah to His ancient people. He remembered the faithfulness and earnestness of Israel when the nation was first born and came out of Egypt under Moses—and went after God into "the waste howling wilderness." Alas, in later years, they would not obey, or trust, or rejoice in God! He therefore tells the Prophet Jeremiah to say to them that He remembers their better days—they seemed to have forgotten, "but," says the Lord—"I have not forgotten. 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals.'"

I. Using the text practically for our own profit, I make this first observation, that GOD REMEMBERS WITH GRACE THE BEST THINGS OF HIS PEOPLE'S EARLY DAYS.

Some of us were converted to God when we were very young and we look back with pleasure upon our early days. But, whether we look back upon them with pleasure or not, God does, and He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals." Why does God remember and prize so highly the early piety of His people, their first faith, their first love, their first zeal?

I think that it is, first, because *all these were His own work*. If there was anything good in us, in the early days after our conversion, the Lord worked it all! Remember Paul's questions to the Corinthians—"Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive?" If there was in you any light, or life, or love, it was the gift of the Spirit of God. If there was any repentance, if there was any faith, it was the work of the Holy Spirit! A man remembers his own work and God, the Holy Spirit, never forgets any of His work upon the spirits of men whom He forms anew.

God also remembers with pleasure those best things in His people's early days because *they gave Him great delight at the time.* It seems a strange thing to say, but it is strangely, yet blessedly true, that it gave God great pleasure to see us repent. Those first tears which we tried to secretly brush away were so precious to the Lord that He stored them away in His bottle! That first faith of ours, though it was but the feeble

tottering of a babe in Grace, was very lovely in God's sight. You know how mothers love to recollect the first words their children began to speak and the broken notes and strange tones in which they lisped their first childish sentences? Well, even so does God remember His children's early utterances which gave Him such pleasure when He first heard them. Let not any of you imagine that God is indifferent to your first prayers, your first praises, your first reformations and purging away of sin! No, He takes infinite delight in them all, for, "like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Therefore, you can be sure that the things which gave Him such joy in your early Christian experience have not faded from His gracious memory!

It is very sweet, however, to reflect that when God says that He remembers the love of our espousals, and the kindness of our youth, *He does not mention the faults connected with our early days*. Our gracious God has a very generous memory—we have often noticed this in the Scriptures. When the Lord and His angels came to Abraham's tent in the plains of Mamre, to give the Patriarch the promise that a son and heir should be born to him, Sarah turned eavesdropper behind the tent doors. It was bad manners on her part and when she had overheard what the Lord said, she disbelieved Him and laughed within herself. This was worse manners, still, on her part, to laugh at the Divine Prophecy, and when she was brought to book for it, she denied that she had laughed, which was still worse! When she laughed within herself, she said, "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old, also?" And the Holy Spirit, writing in the New Testament about her, does not say anything concerning her lie, or her unbelief, but He mentions the only good thing about her speech, which was that she called her husband, "lord"—"For after this manner in the old time the holy women, also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling Him lord."

Oh, the gracious goodness that spies out the diamond on the dunghill! There was but one bright star in all that murky sky, yet the Spirit of God saw it and moved Peter to write concerning it! That which was to Sarah's credit is recorded, while that which was to her *discredit* is blotted out. "You have heard of the patience of Job," have you not? The Holy Spirit is very careful to remind us, in the New Testament, of the patience of Job, but He does not say anything about Job's impatience! Yet the Patriarch cursed the day of his birth in a very bitter and wicked fashion and this might have been remembered to his shame, but it was not. Ah, our blessed Lord, when He forgives our sin, forgets it, too! But He remembers all the excellencies and all the Graces which His Spirit works in the hearts and lives of His people.

Besides this, *the Lord so remembers the best things of our early days that He recounts them.* In looking back upon my first days with God, I can see much to deplore, much in which, as a young man, I fell very short of what I ought to have been. But God says to me, and to each one of you who are His children, "I remember you; and I do not remember your shortcomings, your blunders, your headstrong hastiness, your

faultiness; but, 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of these espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.'" To my mind, it is very sweet that the Lord should so recollect all that was good in His people, in the days gone by, that He recounted it, and recorded it in His Word.

Now, to show how strong is the Lord's memory of all that was good in His people at their beginnings, *He gives a detailed account of it*. He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth." Let us try whether we can remember how we showed our kindness to our God in our early days. We resolved, when first we knew the Lord, that we would live wholly to His praise and we tried to begin, almost as soon as we were converted, to do a little something for our Master. We did all that we could do with the little strength that we then had. It was not much that we could do, but, in looking back upon it, we remember that it seemed a great deal to us, then. We prayed very earnestly over it. We went to our work with much trembling—we were very diffident in ourselves, but we had a firm confidence in the Gospel—and we had a sweet hope in God that even *we* might do something for His praise!

Now, perhaps, we go to our Sunday school class and forget to pray! We sit down, open the book and feel quite competent to teach. Possibly now we go into the pulpit and begin to preach. It is quite a matter of course with us—we have delivered so many sermons that we feel quite easy about our power to instruct the people—but it was not so at first. I can remember how my knees knocked together when I first preached the Gospel, for fear that I should not preach it all, and should not deliver my soul so as to be clear of the blood of all men! What sighs my sermons cost me—and what tears! And, surely, God remembers all this, for He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth. You were but a youth, but then your heart was all aglow with sacred fervor, your spirit was firmly confiding in your God, your zeal was burning for My Glory."

Then the Lord adds, "I remember you…*the love of your espousals*." Oh, some of us did love God very fervently in our early days! I can recollect the day of my Baptism very well. At this moment it comes back to my memory—I cannot help remembering it because the text suggests that we should, each one, think of our first days with God. It was a summer's morning, the 3rd of May, 1850, and quite early, at the very rising of the sun, I was up, that I might have a quiet hour or two of prayer to God, as thus commenced my public life as a Christian avowing my faith in my Lord Jesus. Then there came a long walk of some eight miles or so to get to the place of Baptism at Isleham Ferry. As I walked along the country road, that week-day morning, with the birds all about me singing, oh, I did feel that I loved my Lord! My soul seemed to dance within me for very joy!

My friends were not believers in Baptism as it is taught in the Word of God and, therefore, I was about to do a strange thing, for none of my family had thus confessed Christ publicly by being immersed in the name of the Sacred Trinity! I remember standing by the river's bank with a great crowd of people all around in barges and boats, looking on. And

when I had walked some considerable distance into the stream to be immersed, and when I rose from the liquid grave, I remember how I felt that, if all the angels in Heaven and all the devils in Hell were gathered there, it mattered not one jot to me! I was Christ's and I had given myself up to be buried with Him, to rise with Him and to live and labor for Him as long as the Lord should spare me! That day my love to my God was bright, and warm, and burning—and that evening, at the little prayer meeting in the vestry, I, who had been the most timid lad, perhaps, in all the world, and never opened my mouth for my Master in public, before, ventured to praise and bless God vocally in the midst of His people and, blessed be His holy name, I have never left off doing so from that day to this!

Many of you might tell a story of your early days which would be much more remarkable than mine. But whether there is anything in them to interest others, or not, God says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." Those were good days, blessed days, days of Heaven upon the earth!—

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!"

And they also seemed to be as sweet to God as they were to us!

You observe that the Lord speaks in our text of Israel's going after Him in the wilderness—"I remember you…*when you went after Me in the wilderness*." That was a grand Exodus when all the hosts of Israel that were in Egypt, without exception, took away all that they had and marched out into the desert! It was nothing but a wilderness; yet, when Moses bade them quit the flesh pots of Egypt, they all did so—"and the children of Israel went up harnessed (or, as the margin has it, "by five in a rank") out of the land of Egypt." Doubling up their unleavened dough and carrying their kneading-troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders, they went right away into the wilderness of the Red Sea, "in a land that was not sown," where they could never reap a harvest, and where it was only natural to fear that they might die of famine. It was bravely done of Israel, thus, to face the howling wilderness as Jehovah led the way in the cloudy-fiery pillar!

Perhaps I speak to some of you who, when you became Christians, had to give up your employment, or to quit some evil trade. Perhaps you had to run the gauntlet of a workshop where everybody pointed the finger at you and laughed you to scorn. Some of you had hard times in those days, yet I will not call them hard, for you never had, in all your life, such joy as you had then! When everybody gave you an ill word, then Christ was most precious to you and your love to Him burned with a steady flame! I think that the happiest days the Church of Christ has ever had, have been her days of persecution! What joy the Methodists had when everybody mobbed them! What bliss the Covenanters experienced when the dragoons of Claverhouse hunted them like partridges upon the mountains! God gives an extraordinary measure of joy to His

people when, in their first days, they, for His sake, can endure anything and everything that they may glorify His holy name!

Now, whatever you may have suffered in the days gone by, the Lord says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." God has a very lively recollection of the simple trust of His people when they began their Christian career, of their child-like confidence in Him, of their intensely earnest prayers, of their delight in His worship and of their readiness for His service! It is a thousand pities that this bright experience should ever fade, but whether it fades or not, God says, "I remember it."

II. So now, secondly, I want to show you that GOD REMEMBERS, WITH A GRACIOUS PURPOSE, THE BEST THINGS OF OUR EARLY DAYS.

He remembers them that He may *make use of and honor us in our later days*. There is many a man, now honored and beloved in the service of God, who would not have been where he is if he had not been faithful to God as a youth. And I believe that there is many a man who has missed his opportunity of serving God through not beginning well. Young man, I charge you, when you become a Christian, be out and out for Christ! Be true to your convictions through and through! Do not neglect the least thing that you see to be in the Scriptures, but determine to follow the Lord fully. If you do that, you will be the kind of man that God will use! There are plenty of young men who are pliant as the willow, they will bend to anything and anyone—and God says, "I can never make anything of them" and, though He saves them, He puts them in the background as far as His service is concerned.

But if there is a young fellow who, from his very youth, is straight as an arrow, one who cannot be bribed, who must do the right and will carry out his convictions at all costs, yes, to the devil's face if necessary, God will say, "That man will do for My service, I will make use of him. He shall be a pillar in the Church in years to come." "I remember you," says the Lord, "the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals and, therefore, I intend to use you greatly to My honor and praise, and to your own joy and honor, too."

And, depend upon it, God remembers these early faithful ones for another reason, namely, *to instruct them and to reveal Himself to them*. "There," He says, "I would have taught that young man something, but he would not learn it, so he shall never know much—he will be only a poor fool all his life. I set a light before him, but he preferred the darkness. Consequently, he shall go on with just glimmer enough to get into Heaven, but a clear perception of My Truth, a deep joy in that Truth, he shall never know as he might have known it if he had, in his youth been faithful and obedient to his God."

I believe that the Lord also remembers what we do in our youthful love and kindness, *that He may sustain us in the time of trouble*. Some poor child of God is in great distress and he cries to his heavenly Father. He does not dare to plead anything that he has *done*—that would be quite

out of character for a child of God—but, for all that, God says, "I remember you; though you have very properly forgotten what you did long ago, and have wept over your many defects since your early days, yet I remember the kindness of your youth, and I will help you. I will be with you in the hour of your need, and I will deliver you."

Especially do I think that this must be true *in the time of old age*. That is a sweet prayer of David, in the 71st Psalm, "O God, You have taught me from my youth: and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." I know what many firms do, especially in these days when business is so bad and competition is so keen—they begin to weed out the men who must go. The head of the firm says, "There is old John, you see, he is between 60 and seventy—he must go." "But, Sir, he carried you on his back when you were a boy. He was with your father." "I cant help it, he must go. He is getting too old and we can get a boy to do his work." That is how men do, do they not? But that is *not* the way God does! He lets us remain in His employment when there is very little that we can do. We pray to Him—

"Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord,"

and He says, "I will never cast you off."

Once His servants, we are engaged for life! Once enlisted in His army, He will never drum us out of the ranks of the soldiers of salvation! We shall be His, forever, for He says, "I remember you." "I remember what you used to do when you could do it. I remember how you worked for Me when you could work for Me, and now that you are getting gray and old, and can do but little in your last days, I will uphold you and bear you safely through." There is nothing in our service that we care to remember, on which we can build any claim upon God—but yet, in the fatherly discipline of His great house, He remembers all that His servants have done and, oftentimes, He sends them cheer, comfort, strength and honor which He might have denied them had they been unfaithful to Him!

Therefore I would encourage you who are beginning the Christian life to walk closely with God. Beware of little slips while you are young men and young women. A little awry with you when you are single may make much awry with you when you are married and when your children are about you. He who begins amiss in the morning of life will probably go the *more* amiss before that life comes to its nightfall. I would charge everyone whom my voice can reach to be quite clear about what his duty is towards God as a Christian and, once clear as to what it is, to go straight ahead in the performance of it.

I am obliged to refer to myself because we must, each one, tell his own experience. Well now, upon that matter of Baptism which I have already mentioned—reading in the Scriptures, I found that *Believers* were baptized. I had never heard anybody preach about Believers' Baptism. When I read about it in the New Testament, I did not know another person in the world who thought as I did and I came to the conclusion that it did not matter to me whether anybody agreed with me or not—my duty was plain! If I was the only person who had found out the will of God, I was

bound to obey it, for I believed it to be God's will that Believers should be baptized on profession of their faith—and I fancied that I should be the first person in modern days to make such a confession! That idea made no difference to me, nor does it now—if there was *anything* that was taught in the Scriptures which had not occurred to anybody else before, I should not ask whether any other person had or had not seen it!

If God commands it, it is not for us to ask whether it is fashionable, or according to the order of other people, but to obey it straightway without a question! I have found, through life, that the habit of going by God's Word as far as I understand it, honestly and rigidly, and giving way to nobody, has kept my road pretty clear. At first, people used to get in my way. Then I drove along the right side of the road and if they did not move, I was obliged to run into them, or, if they ran into me, I could not help it. Now I find that they just let me take the right side of the road and go straight ahead! I should do that whether they let me or not—therefore I have got to be "a chartered libertine" in these matters—permitted to do what I conceive to be right according to the Word of God!

If a soldier, in any of our barracks, does not dare to kneel down to pray before his comrades, he will have a hard time of it. But let him once do it boldly and he can do it, again, after that! If there is any young man here who is in a house of business, and he says, "I will be a religious man, but I will be very moderate about it," he will have a hard fight of it, I know he will! But if you come straight out and say, "I am beholden to no mortal man as to what I shall do. I am only God's servant and if He bids me do anything, I raise no question about what others may say of it—the thing has to be done and I am going to do it," why, you will get respect before long! It is, after all, the easiest way to take the hardest way when that way is right! Up with your flag, man! There, let it brave the battle and the breeze, and all that may come to it—you will win the victory so!

But to pop your flag up when everybody is out of the way, and then to stand and look through your telescope, and presently to say, "There is somebody coming, I must pull the flag down," and then, after a while, say, "It ought to be up, the gentleman has gone. He will not look at it—haul it up again! Am I not brave? Oh, but here comes somebody else, pull it down, John, fold it up and put it away till there is nobody about—fly it at nights when no eye can see it!" That is a dastardly, cowardly way of pretending to be religious which I hope none of you will wish to follow! Oh, that in early life you may bravely fellow your God! He will remember it to your credit and honor in the days to come!

III. Now, lastly, and this ought to have been the major part of my discourse, GOD WOULD HAVE US REMEMBER THE BEST THINGS OF OUR EARLY DAYS FOR OUR REBUKE.

Ah, you are not what you used to be—not so decided, not so joyous, not so faithful! What have you been doing? Ask yourselves a few questions. *Were you not happier, then, than you are now*? If it was so, then go back on the old track! If it was better with you in your early days than it is now, get back to the old quarters! Pray the Lord to restore to you the

joy of His salvation! Why, Pilgrim, by this time, if you had held on your way, you might have been very much nearer the gates of the Celestial City! What a deal of time you have lost—and now you have to go back to that arbor where you fell asleep and lost your roll! You have to go over the ground *three times*—first an advance, then a going back, and then a going forward, again—yet once might have been enough! You have been very foolish and you have lost a good deal, but now, by God's Grace, since He says, "I remember you in better times," answer to Him, "Lord, I remember those better times, too, and, by Your gracious help, I am going back that I may have them again."

For listen. *Do you think you were a fool then*? Why, you were up early in the morning that you might get to hear the Gospel! You used to get into a crowded place and stand in the aisle! Somehow you were not half as tired when you used to stand all the while as you now are when you sit! And the preaching—what wonderful preaching it used to be! I do not suppose that it was any better than what you hear, now, but still, it did *seem* all on fire, did it not? And those Prayer Meetings! And your own private devotions—what hallowed seasons they were! And the Bible, when you read it—how it used to shine out in letters of fire before your eyes! Were you a fool then? Were you deceived, do you think? If so, I do not wonder at your turning back! But if you were no fool, then, but a wise man, what are you, now, that you have gone away from all this blessedness? Oh, come back! I charge you, by the living God, return to the place from which you have gone astray! Do you not owe more to God, now, than you did then? You have come a good way on the road since then—ought you to love Him *less*? He has blessed you. He has preserved you. He has forgiven you. He has manifested Himself to you. You have had some grand times when your heart has burned within you—you have sometimes had a taste of Heaven upon earth! Should you not, therefore, love Him much more than at the first? Oh, come back! Come back with tears of deep regret and give yourself, again, to God!

For, look, *you have already slipped a long way down*. Why, looking up, I can hardly see how high you used to be! You were so near Heaven's gate, but you have come down, oh, so far! In the course of a year or two, more, if you keep on going down, you will be still lower! "The Down-Grade" is awfully easy—where will *you* soon be? I hope that it will not come to pass that you will be drinking the cup of the drunkard, or singing the song of the profane. "Oh, no!" you say, "I will never do *that*." I do not know. I am not sure. If a man were to fall off the Monument, when he had fallen some 20 feet, I do not see what is to prevent him from falling to the ground. Once begin to fall and who knows how low you may go? Oh, for a miracle of mercy to stop you in your dread descent! May God work that miracle and save you by His Grace!

Do you not think, dear Friends, any of you who are losing your first love and turning from your first kindness to God, *that you are sowing some ugly thorns for your deathbed*? You may lie a long time, perhaps in sickness and weakness, and then it will be a wretched thing to turn on that uneasy pillow and say, "Ah, I did not serve God as I ought to have

done! I did not live to God as I should have done." It is amazing how some truly good men will, at the last, trouble themselves about very little things. I knew a dear friend who used to have a church in his house. A number of Christian people met for worship and when he grew ill, the singing was too much for him. I think that it really *was* too much for him to bear and the doctor said that his friends had better go somewhere else on the Sabbath—and they did—and I think very properly so. Yet, when my friend lay dying, I had hard work to comfort him, "because," he said, "I turned the people of God out of my house." I said, "No, you did not! You were ill and it was not fit that they should disturb you when you were so weak. I think that you were quite right, my Brother." "Oh, no!" he said, "Oh, no! I shall never forgive myself for that."

And he was whipping himself for it most cruelly. And I thought, "Oh, dear me! The many that I know who have not such a tender conscience as this dear man of God has!" Still, let none of us do anything for which we shall have to flog ourselves when we come to die. Child of God, act so that when you have to look back upon it all, though you know that all your sin is forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus, you may also be able to feel, "In this thing God helped me to do righteously and to serve Him with all my heart, and so now, when I have come to the close of the chapter, it is with devout gratitude for having been preserved in integrity and not with bitter regrets for having been unfaithful."

Have you ever seen a waterlogged ship towed into harbor? She has encountered a storm and all her masts are gone. She has sprung a leak and is terribly disabled. But a tug has got hold of her and is drawing her in—a poor miserable wreck, just rescued from the rocks. I do not want to enter Heaven that way, "scarcely saved." But now look at the other picture. There is a fair wind, the sails are full, there is a man at the helm, every sailor is in his place and the ship comes in with a swing! She stops at her proper place in the harbor and down goes the anchor with cheery shouts of joy from the mariners who have reached their desired haven!

That is the way to go to Heaven—in full sail, rejoicing in the blessed Spirit of God who has given us an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! May you so live, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you shall go into Heaven that way, with an abundant entrance! And may none of us be found among those who have so lived on earth that they will not be missed when they are gone—and who will only be welcomed into Heaven as those who are "saved, yet so as by fire"!

So I commend these thoughts to you. Let our days be such that we may look back upon them with pleasure! And if they are not so, now, let us begin to look back upon them with *repentance*—and turn to God with full purpose of heart, for His dear Son's sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 2:1-25.

Verses 1-3. *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem saying, Thus says the LORD, 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of His increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, says the LORD.'* God reminds His people of what they used to be in their first days, when they came out of Egypt. They had very sadly declined from what they then were. They were none too faithful to the Lord, then, but they had fallen back, even, from that condition! Does not this passage come home to some of you who are not, now, what you once were? May the Lord graciously speak through these words to your ears and to your heart, if you have backslidden from Him in any degree!

4, 5. *Hear you the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus says the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?* What faults have you to find with God, that you have left Him? What fault have you seen in the ever-blessed Christ, that your love to Him should have grown cold?

6, 7. *Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when you entered, you defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination.* It is a sad charge against anybody that he forgets the care that God has taken of him in the days of his poverty and affliction. When a man becomes rich and is surrounded by earthly comforts, it is a terrible thing that he should then forget God, or that, the more God does for him, the less he thinks of God! This is strangely ungrateful conduct, yet the children of Israel acted thus. They were better in the wilderness—though they were bad enough there—they were better in the wilderness than they were in Canaan, better on the desert sand than they were in the land that flowed with milk and honey! And there are some, nowadays, who were better in their poverty than they are in their prosperity—and some who were better by a long way in their times of sickness than they now are in their palmy days of health! Alas, that it should be so!

8. *The priests said not, Where is the LORD? And they that handle the Law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.* It is always ill with the people when the ministers go wrong. If the dogs do not protect the flock, but are dumb dogs that cannot bark, what is to become of the sheep?

9-11. *Therefore I will yet plead with you, says the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Cyprus and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Have nations changed their gods, which are yet not gods? But My*

people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. God bids them go to the West, across the Mediterranean, to Cyprus, that is, *probably* Cyprus, or to go to the East, to Kedar, or Arabia, and see whether any Gentile nation ever changed its gods, which really were not gods. "And yet," says the Lord, "here is a people that knew the one living and true God, but they have turned aside to idols—'My people has changed their glory for that which does not profit.'" O Friend, if there is no truth in religion, I do not wonder that you give it up! But if you ever knew its blessed sweetness. If Christ was ever precious to you—if you did once enjoy the Gospel of His Grace—how is it that you have grown cold towards it and declined from its ways?

12, 13. *Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* To go away from the flowing fountain to the stagnant waters of a cistern is great folly! But to go and hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water, but merely mock your thirst, is madness of the worst kind!

14. *Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled?* God made him to be His son, not His slave, but Israel went aside from God and so became a slave, being carried away into captivity by the very nation whose gods the chosen people worshipped!

15, 16. *The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitants. Also the children of Noph and Tahaphanes have broken the crown of your head.* The Israelites went and worshipped idols and then the very nations whose gods they worshipped invaded the land and broke the crown of their head, or made them bald, which was, to the Jews, a mark of mourning or of disgrace.

17. *Have you not procured this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when He led you by the way?* You who are depressed in soul. You who have grown spiritually poor. You who are in great trouble of heart, listen—"Have you not procured this unto yourself?" Did you not make the rod for your own back by going away from your God? It was well enough with you when you trusted in Him, but now that you have turned aside from Him, all these evils have come upon you! "Have you not procured this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken Jehovah, your God, when He led you by the way?"

18. *And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?* "The waters of the Nile," or, as it may be read, "the waters of that muddy river." The Israelites had suffered so much during their long captivity in Egypt that one would have thought they would never have wanted to go near the house of bondage again—"What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?"

18. *Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?* You are trying to find pleasure in the world. You are going to the resorts of sin, to seek amusement there. If you are a child of God, "What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?

Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" What are you doing there, Elijah? You have lost the comforts of religion by your backsliding—and are you now trying to make up for them by going into the world's gaiety? It will never do! You can never fill your belly with the husks that the swine eat. If you were one of the swine, you might do so—but if you are your Father's son, it is only the bread in His house that will satisfy your hungry soul!

19-25. *Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the LORD, your God, and that My fear is not in you, says the Lord GOD of hosts. For of old time I have broken your yoke, and burst your bands; and you said, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree you wander, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how, then, are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me? For though you wash yourself with niter, and take you much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord God. How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See your way in the valley, know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary traversing her ways; a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves. In her month they shall find her. Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst, but you said, There is no hope—no—for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* God compares His erring people, in the delirium of their sin, to these wild creatures that cannot be tamed, but are driven by their ungovernable passions wherever they will. Alas, that men should be so sinful that God can only find a parallel to them in the wild donkeys of the wilderness!

See, also, what despair will do for its victims. When a man says, "There is no hope," then he feels that for him there is no repentance. When he believes that God will not forgive him, then he will not turn from his evil ways. "You said, There is no hope, no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." God save any here present who are getting into the clutches of Giant Despair! May they know the true goodness of God and may that goodness lead them to repentance! 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.

NUMBER 2400—OR, "ESCAPE FOR YOUR LIFE!"
NO. 2400

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 27, 1887.

"Escape for your life."
Genesis 19:17.

THE Lord Himself said to Lot, "Escape for your life," although the command was sent by one of His chosen messengers. God has messengers, nowadays, and He still sends by them short, sharp, urgent, stimulating messages like this, "Escape for your life." This message was sent in love. God loved Lot and, therefore, He would save him from the impending doom of Sodom. I doubt not that this message of love was spoken by the messenger in very solemn tones. I do not know how angels speak, but I am certain that the very heart of the messenger was apparent in the message when he said to Lot, "Escape for your life." Whether he whispered it in Lot's ears, or uttered it in a loud voice, I cannot tell, but anyway, I am sure that it was delivered as it ought to be delivered and it had an immediate effect upon the man who heard it, for he was obedient to it.

Now, it may be that God has designs of love towards you who are here, who, as yet, have never fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you. Remember that the Gospel admonition comes to you fresh from God—it has been in this blessed Book for ages—but it has not grown stale! It still leaps from the mouth of God, filled with all its native energy, and though I who have to deliver it to you may not speak it as I would desire, for I am very feeble, I will at least speak it out of the very depths of my soul while I try to plead with every unconverted man or woman whom my message may reach—and this shall be the one burden of my pleading—"Escape for your life."

I. Notice, first, that THERE WAS NO SAFETY FOR LOT WHERE HE WAS.

He must escape from the doomed city. The angel did not propose to him that he should stop in Sodom and, beneath some sheltering arch, hide himself from the fire-shower. No, the message was, "Escape! Flee from Sodom! Escape for your life." So, to you who are unconverted, we can bring no proposals of hope if you stay where you are! We can hold out no hope to you either in this world or in that which is to come! Neither a lesser nor a "larger hope" do we believe in, apart from your laying hold on eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ! Stay where you are and you

are doomed. Remain *what* you are and you must perish in the overthrow of that City of Destruction which God will certainly burn up before long!

There was no safety for Lot where he was, so, let me say to you who are unbelieving and unconverted, *there is no safety for you in unforgiven sin*. It does not matter what form your sin has taken—whether you have been a profligate or a moralist—as long as the sin you have committed is *unforgiven*, there is no safety, for whether your sins are as scarlet, or, in your judgment, of a milder hue, does not affect the truth of what I say—you must be washed in the precious blood of Christ and pardoned through His great atoning Sacrifice received by faith, or else you will die in your sins and you will be driven to the place where hope can never enter! If you die with your sins upon you—where death leaves you—eternity will find you! Once lost, you will be lost forever. So, there is no safety in unforgiven sin.

And, further, *there is no safety in unforsaken sin*. No, you must escape for your life from *every sin*. The drunk cannot be saved and keep to his cups. The adulterer cannot be saved and indulge his evil passions. The thief cannot be saved and remain dishonest. The only salvation for you is *salvation from your sins*—and that is the salvation that we preach! How many would like to be saved from the punishment due to sin, and yet to be allowed to go on in the sin! But there is nothing of that kind of teaching in the Scripture! God did not send His Son to be the Excuser or the Minister of sin, but to be the Savior from sin! There is no hope for you if you stay in this Sodom—you must get out of it—you must clear right away from it.

Perhaps you say, "I will change my place of residence. I will go from the slums of the evil city into the cleaner and more respectable part of it." I tell you that you have to come right out of it! You must altogether quit the region of sin. You must flee from the realms of iniquity or else you shall be consumed in the destruction of the city. Up and away from all sin! Up and away! Our cry is not, "Hide in a corner," or, "Shift into a better place," but, "Escape for your life!"

Again, *there is no safety in unbelief*. You may say, "I do not believe this," but, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, it is true! In my own heart, soul and conscience, I know that there is a Judge of all the earth, and that He must do right, and that the day shall come when He will execute vengeance upon those who live and die in sin, for He cannot wink at iniquity. It is not in the Nature of a holy God to suffer sin to go unpunished! You may shut your eyes to this Truth of God, but it is there. You may disbelieve it, but it is there. You may ridicule it, but it is there, and you shall, before long, know it to be so! You must come out of this state of unbelief if you are to be saved! There is no salvation in unbelief. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned." There is to be no flinching in this matter—I am not sent here to please you who do not believe, or to talk with bated breath, as though I sympathized with your unbelief. I denounce it as high treason against the majesty of God and, therefore, I cry unto you, "Repent and believe the Gospel," for if you will not, you must perish in your unbe-

lief! "If you believe not," says Christ, "that I am He, you shall die in your sins." There is no safety in unbelief and, therefore, we say, as the angel said to Lot, "Escape for your life."

And once more, *let me remind you that there is no safety in self-righteousness*. If anybody here says, "Thank God, I am no doubter, I am no profligate, I am no open sinner," I am glad if you can truthfully say that, but still remember, if you trust in your own righteousness, you cannot be saved! You must come out of that condemned city or else you are a lost man. I spoke with one, this morning, who is, I believe, earnestly seeking salvation, and he said to me, "I have denied myself this, and I have cast away that." I was pleased to hear it, but I said to him, "You have denied these things to yourself, but have you denied yourself? That is to say, have you left off *trusting in yourself*?" The hardest self-denial is to deny yourself and get right away from all confidence in your own doings, feelings and everything that comes of yourself, for you might as well hope to be saved by your sins as by your good works! The road to Hell by human merit is as certain as the road there by human sin! If you seek to insult the Atonement of Christ by setting up your merit as though it were as good as that Atonement, or by trying to prove that you do not need that Atonement, you are just barring Heaven's gate against yourself! You must come out of that self-righteousness if you would be saved! My only cry to you is, "Escape, escape, escape for your life, for there is no safety for you where you are!"

II. But now, in the next place, according to this message of the angel, IF LOT IS TO BE SAVED, HE MUST RUN FOR IT AT ALL COSTS—"Escape for your life."

First, *he must leave his former comrades*. Have you any jolly companions who are not Christians? "They are bright, lively fellows," you say. But they are doing you infinite mischief—they are leading you away from God and His Christ! Break loose from them—"Escape for your life." Though they seek to hold you back, tear yourself away from them and even leave your garment in their hands, as Joseph left his in the hands of Potiphar's wife! "Escape for your life." Quit all evil company.

Next, *Lot had to leave his former comforts*. For the sake of comfort, he had gone to Sodom and, doubtless, he had his house well furnished there. But he must quit it all. Probably it was that excellent house that made Lot's wife look back—she could hardly relinquish all those nice things of theirs even for life, itself! Beware, when you are seeking Christ, that you do not let your money or your business stand in your way! It will be better for you to enter Heaven a beggar than being a rich man, to be cast into Hell! It were better for you to be as houseless as the most unpitied waif about whom the wintry winds are howling—it were better for you to die in a ditch and to be saved—than that you should live in a palace and yet, after all, be cast into Hell fire! I charge you, be ready to give up all things, if necessary, sooner than lose your soul. "Escape, escape, escape for your life!"

Yet again, *Lot must not stop to argue*—and nor must you. You do not see the danger. You need more evidence. You have objections—to all of

which my one solitary answer is—"Escape, escape, escape for your life!" You have not time for me to discuss your difficulties, now. When you are saved, it will be soon enough for us to argue out the moot points, but now, while the fire cloud hovers above your head, escape for your life! Yonder drowning man will not clutch the rope until I have explained to him the doctrine of specific gravity. O Fool, what have you to do with specific gravity when you are drowning? Lay hold of the rope and live! So, there are some who must have election or predestination explained to them, or the doctrine of the human will—they must have this, that, and the other opened up to them and made clear as daylight. I beseech you, do not be such madmen! Do not trifle with your souls, but escape for your life! That is the one business of the present hour—see to that, first, and let other matters wait awhile till you are in a fit condition to consider them.

If Lot is to be rescued, *he must, as men say, put his best foot forward.* It is quite early in the morning, but before the sun has risen much higher, all Sodom and Gomorrah will be destroyed. You have already waited far too long, my unsaved Friend! Gray hairs are on you head here and there—why will you delay any longer? Did you not catch the solemn tones of our hymn—

"Hasten, sinner, to be wise,
Stay not for the morrow's sun"?

We sang that line over and over again in the different verses—

"Stay not for the morrow's sun."

Oh, that God would, in great mercy, press that appeal home upon you! "Escape for your life."

Lot must not sit down and take things easy—nor must you. Lot must not begin to crawl at a snail's pace and amuse himself by looking down every side street of Sodom as he leaves it—he must run from the doomed city and you, also, by God's Grace, must bestir yourself! You must quit your sin by repentance and lay hold of Christ by faith. God help you to do so! Oh, that my lips could speak the longing language of my heart, and cease to utter the feeble syllables that do not express half what I feel! How can words fully express the burning desires of a soul yearning over sinners? But if you become willing to be led, even by my feeble speech, to listen to God's almighty voice as He says to you, through me, His messenger—"Escape for your life."

I cannot help, just by way of parenthesis, pointing out to you the contrast between the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the repentance of the Ninevites. At the command of God, Jonah went though Nineveh and this was all he had to say, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Again, and again, and again, in bitter tones, the Prophet cried, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"—and the whole body of the Ninevites sought for mercy and found it—with nothing to help them to pray but this, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" Now, if you have nothing better to comfort you than this, "Who can tell?"—

"'Perhaps He will admit my plea,

Perhaps will hear my prayer,'"

why, you have good ground to go upon in approaching your God! But, Friends, you are not under such a dispensation as were the Ninevites—I have not to cry to you, "Yet forty days, and you shall be destroyed." I have to tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life! I have to entreat and beseech you to lay hold on eternal life by believing in the Lord Jesus. Oh, how you ought to welcome such a message as that!

If there is anybody whom I am addressing who is actually marked for death and who knows that he carries about in his body that which must, in a very short time, bring him to the grave. One who is well aware that he cannot recover from the incurable disease that has seized him—yet, even that should not hinder him from seeking God's face—rather it should move him at once to turn to Jesus! I can see a man before me now—my mind's eye can see him and I know that he must die, I am sure of it. Poor wretch, he has been a thief! His hands and both his feet are nailed up, they are bleeding from the cruel nails and, within a short time, he must die in agony. Yet I hear him cry out, as he turns his eyes on the crucified Jesus Christ, "Lord, remember me!" He is nearly dead and almost in Hell, but he cries, "Lord, remember me," and he is saved—and today is with Christ in Paradise!

Now, you who have a cancer, you who are sick and ill, you who are poor and broken down and feel as if you must soon die, you who are as great a sinner as the dying thief was, say to Jesus, "Lord, remember me," and He *will* remember you! There is no reason under the earth, nor *on* the earth, nor in Heaven, itself—there is no supposable reason why you should not pray! And if you pray and seek the Lord's face, you shall not come to Him in vain, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." God help you to come, now, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake!

III. Now, to conclude, let me remind you that LOT HAD EVERYTHING AT STAKE and, therefore, the angel said to him, "Escape for your life."

Suppose he had stayed in Sodom—*then he would have lost all.* He would not have saved his furniture, or his gold, or his silver—he would have lost all that he had. Suppose you stop your sin—will you really save anything by it? "I shall save myself from thought," says one. Oh, but do you think you are an ox, or a donkey, that thought should be trouble to you? Why, it surely will be your wisdom to addict yourself to the most sedulous care about your eternal interests! Suppose there should be a cry of, "Fire!" raised in this house, tonight, as there was but a little while ago in Spitalfields—how many there are who would rush to the doors in a mad panic to escape for their lives! Yet, surely, the *soul's* life, the *eternal life*, is more precious than the life of the body! Will you not make *that* the first point to be considered and settled—for, if you could by sin gain the whole world—yet what would it profit you when you would lose your own soul?

Again, if Lot had not fled out of Sodom, *he would, himself, have perished.* Not merely would his garments have been burnt, but *he* would

have perished. Not only would his gold and his silver have melted in the fire, but he would have perished. That was a true saying, though Satan uttered it, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." And all that a man has he ought to give for his soul, for the immortal part of his being, for his higher and better nature! Why, if your soul is cast into Hell, it would have been better for you that you had never been born! If you neglect the Great Salvation and you die and perish in your iniquity, you have lost everything! You are not merely like a bankrupt who has lost his gold, but you have lost yourself! I beseech you, therefore, listen to me as I cry to you, in my Master's name, "'Escape for your life,' your immortal life, which is now in imminent danger!" Your existence will continue whether you are lost or saved, but your *life*! Have you yet received eternal life at the hands of God? Your *life*! Will you be content to lose it and to perish in your sin?

The worst point about this story is that *if Lot had not escaped, he would have perished with the men of Sodom.* He could not endure them—he was vexed with their filthy conversation! How horrible, then, would it have been for him to perish with them! I cannot bear to think that some of you upright, moral people may yet be lost! You were never drunks, and yet you will perish with the drunk unless you repent and trust in Jesus! You were never swearers, but you will be as surely damned as the blasphemers will be unless you come to Christ! You cannot bear impurity or filthy language—there is much about you that is most amiable and excellent—but even to you, the Savior says, "You must be born again." And if you are not born again, if you have no faith in Christ, if you are not converted so as to become as little children, you will as surely perish as will the worst of men!

You sometimes read in the newspaper a horrible story of vice and crime and you wish that it had never been printed, and I wish the same. But what must it be for you to be shut up forever with such as those who commit these unmentionable abominations? Yet there are but two places for man's eternal abode—Heaven and Hell—and if you are not saved so as to go to Heaven, where can you go but into the same pit with all the multitude of transgressors who shall perish in their sins? I wish that you who are outwardly moral and upright would think of this Truth of God. It seems to me as if I ought not to further press it upon you, for you are reasonable beings, you are not shut up in Bedlam. I pray you, therefore, run no longer such fearful risks as you have run up to now, but escape for your lives.

If Lot had been destroyed in the overthrow of Sodom, there would have been one thing about him which there would not have been about the race of the Sodomites, *he would have perished after having been warned.* When the fire-flakes began to fall and Lot felt the terrible burning, he would have had this barbed dart driven into his heart—"I was told to escape. I was taken outside the city gate. I was led to a place of vantage and charged to escape for my life. Nobody else had that opportunity—nobody else in these cities was called, thus, to escape! I had a special appeal made to me by the messenger of God, and I refused it and, there-

fore, I shall die a self-murderer, having chosen my own delusions." O Sirs, O Sirs, if you go from this Tabernacle to Hell, it shall be hard work for you! If you perish, I will be clear of your blood. As long as this voice can speak, I will plead with you that you do not destroy yourselves!

Look at the myriads of Africa, and the millions in China and India who have never heard the Gospel! I leave their future in the hands of God, all merciful, but they *cannot* enter Heaven! Neither can you! But there will be this about your doom, that you had the means of Grace—you had the invitations of mercy, you had the expostulations of God's Word! And you chose—you resolutely chose—to put eternal life far from you! O God, You who have made these men and women, if they have lost their reason, give it back to them and may Your sweet Spirit teach them, now, to judge righteously! And may they at once count it to be inevitable that every wise man should escape for his life and flee from the wrath to come!

I shall not detain you much longer, for surely I have said enough. Only this much must be added before I close. There was *a special favor in the case of Lot*, for Abraham had prayed for him. I should not wonder if some here present are receiving a warning from me just now because someone else has been praying for them. Abraham had prayed for Sodom and, of course, especially for Lot and, therefore, God's messenger must go to bring Lot out of the doomed city. At this moment, while I am speaking, your mother is praying for you. While I am preaching, your wife is praying for you. Some of you have been made the subjects of special and particular prayer—you know that it is so! She who is now in Heaven never ceased to pray for you as long as she was here—and her many prayers—shall they not be now answered? They are undying prayers, though she who breathed them has long been dead—they still live in the Presence of God! Has He not sent His messenger, on that account, to bring you out of the City of Destruction? Here! Here! Let me grasp your hand and let us, together, flee from the wrath to come and run to yonder Cross where there is safety, for none ever looked to the Christ that bled thereon and looked in vain! I feel impressed that there are some persons to whom this message is a peculiar answer to very special prayers that have gone up to God on their behalf.

This message will, I trust, come to them *as a special warning*, as the Lord's messengers reached Lot in a mysterious way. How came those angels in Sodom to tell Lot to escape for his life? How very oddly people are brought where the message of salvation is proclaimed! You did not intend to be in the Tabernacle, tonight, did you? You had an engagement to be somewhere else, but here you are, and you have never been here before! Yesterday you would not even have *dreamt* of being here tonight—but here you are! To what end are you here? God has, in a mysterious way, brought you here to look in the face of this man who cares for your soul and who says to you in the name of God, "I beseech you, escape for your life!"

Then, again, this message came to Lot *at a special time*—on the morning in which the city was to be destroyed. An hour later, it would have been too late. I sometimes feel an awful solemnity creeping over me as I

stand in this place, because I know many things which I cannot tell you about the strange way in which God speaks here. You remember that just before I went away for my rest, I told you the story of the godless young man who left his father's house? He was going to Australia, followed by his parents' prayers. It was Sunday night—he was about to sail on Wednesday and he thought that he would spend the Sunday evening here in this house, as he knew that it would please his mother. Better, still, it pleased God that night to touch his heart and, we trust, to save his soul!

I put into the "Personal Notes" in *The Sword and the Trowel* for December, the letter that he wrote home to his parents telling them how God had met with their prodigal boy. That letter reached them only a few hours before a telegram arrived, saying that the vessel had been run into at Graves End and the young man and five others had been drowned! Oh, what a mercy that, just a few hours before he had to meet his God, his God met with him! I may be speaking to some others who are in just the same position, just on the borders of eternity—I cannot tell. You know that it is but two or three Sunday nights ago since one of our Brothers sat over yonder, in the last pew in the middle. He came into the Tabernacle, covered his face for prayer, and immediately died. We had to delay the service, you remember, while he was quietly carried away.

He was a child of God, but suppose it had been some of you? Suppose it were some of you tonight? What would become of you? God save you even now! Do not run any more risks. There is but a step between you and death, a step between you and Hell if you are unbelievers! Therefore, escape for your lives, and escape tonight—

"Stay not for the morrow's sun."

God help you to have done with delaying and to feel that you must and will run away to the Lord Jesus Christ at once! Put your soul into His hands and if you do, He gives you this guarantee , "None shall pluck you from My hands." Your soul will be safe enough in His keeping! If I take my money to the bank, it is credited to my account. What do I do, then? Do I loaf about and, at last say to the clerk, "Is that money safe?" He would think that my mind was a little wandering!

Sometime ago there was a bank in France to which there came a man who had put in some thousand francs or so, and he said to the banker, "Have you got my thousand francs?" "Yes, certainly. Do you want the money?" "I should like to see it," he said. "Well, here is a thousand francs," and he laid them down before him on the counter. "Thank you," he said, "I do not know that I want to take the cash, now—it is there, alright, so I am satisfied." The next morning, he came in again and he wanted, once more, to see his money. I believe that the banker cut the connection and told him that he did not need such a customer as that to bank with him. If he could not trust the banker with his money, he had better take it home with him.

Now, if you cannot trust Christ with your souls, go and save yourselves! But if you can trust Christ, put away all those foolish doubts, fears and anxieties, and say—

"Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour!
Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place."

Finally, the reason why the angel's message had such power with Lot was that God, Himself, was in it. That gave it a *special pressure* and I have been praying that God, Himself, may be in my message, now—that He may speak, gently speak, and powerfully speak to many of you! You will scarcely know why it is, but you will say, "I never felt like this before. I will arise and go unto my Father. I will repent of my sin. I will look to Jesus, the Crucified Savior, God helping me! But why am I saying this? Why do I feel thus softened, I who used to be hard as steel? Why am I moved to this surrender of myself to my Savior?"

It will be the sweet Spirit of the blessed God gently working upon your heart and graciously inclining you to yield yourself to the Lord! I pray that it may be so, even now, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 18:17-33; 19:12-28.

Genesis 18:17-19. *And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him.* Abraham is called, "the friend of God." It was not merely that God was his Friend—that was blessedly true and it was a great wonder of Grace—but he was honored to be called, "the friend of God"—one with whom God could hold sweet converse, a man after His own heart, in whom He trusted, to whom He revealed His secrets. I am afraid there are not many men of Abraham's sort in the world just now, but, wherever there *is* such a man with whom God is familiar, he will be sure to be one who orders his household aright! If the Lord is my Friend, and if I am, indeed, His friend, I shall wish Him to be respected by my children, and I shall endeavor to dedicate my children to His service. I fear that the decline of family godliness, which is so sadly prevalent in these days, is the source of a great many of the crying sins of the age! The Church of God at large would have been more separate from the world if the little church in each man's house had been more carefully trained for God. If you want the Lord to confide in you and to trust you with His secrets, you must see that He is able to say of you what He said of Abraham—"he will command his children and his household after him."

20-22. *And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down, now, and see*

whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from there, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. He was in no hurry to close that blessed interview—when he had once come into the Lord's immediate Presence, he lingered there. Those who are friends of God like to be much in their Lord's company!

23. *And Abraham drew near.* There is nothing like coming very close to God in prayer. "Abraham drew near." He was about to use his influence with his great Friend—not for himself, but for these men of Sodom who were going to be destroyed. Happy are those who, when they are near to God, use the opportunity in pleading for others, yes, even for the most wicked and abandoned of men.

23-25. *And said, Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Perhaps there are fifty righteous within the city: will You also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from You. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Abraham bases his argument upon the Justice of God! And when a man dares to do that, it is mighty pleading, for, depend upon it, God will never do an unjust thing! If you dare to plead His Righteousness, His Infallible Justice, you plead most powerfully!

26-30. *And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: perhaps there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: will You destroy all the city for lack of five? And He said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spoke unto Him yet again, and said, Perhaps there shall be forty found there. And He said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto Him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Perhaps there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.* This time the Patriarch has advanced by ten—before, it was by fives. Pleading men grow bolder and braver in their requests! A man who is very familiar with God will, by-and-by, venture to say that, which, at the first, he would not have dared utter!

31, 32. *And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Perhaps there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Perhaps ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.* He went no farther than to plead that Sodom might be spared if 10 righteous persons could be found in it. I have heard some say that it was a pity Abraham did not go on pleading with God, but I would not dare to say so. He knew better when to begin and when to leave off than you and I do! There are certain restraints in prayer which a man of God cannot explain to others, but which he, nevertheless, feels. God moves His servants to pray in a certain case and they pray with great liberty and manifest power. Another case may seem to be precisely like it, yet the mouth of the former suppli-

ant is shut, and in his heart he does not feel that he can pray as he did before. Do I blame the men of God? Assuredly not! The Lord deals wisely with His servants and He tells them, by gentle hints, which they quickly understand, when and where to stop in their supplications.

33. *And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.* We know that the angels went down to Sodom, where they were received by Lot and despitefully used by the Sodomites. We will continue our reading at the 12th verse of the next chapter.

Genesis 19:12. *And the men said unto Lot, Have you here any besides? Son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whatever you have in the city, bring them out of this place.* Let me bid every Christian to look about him, among all his kith and kin, to see which of them yet remain unconverted! Let your prayers go up for them all—"Son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters."

13, 14. *For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD has sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.* "The old man is in his dotage," they said, "he always was peculiar. He never acted like the rest of the citizens. He came in here as a stranger and he has always been strange in his behavior."

15, 16. *And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters, which are here; lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth and set him outside the city.* I have always felt pleased to think that there were just hands enough to lead out these four people, Lot, his wife and their two daughters. Had there been one more, there would have been no hand to lay hold of the fifth person—but these two angels, with their four hands, could just lead these four persons outside the doomed city. God will always have agents enough to save His elect—there shall be sufficient Gospel preaching, even in the darkest and deadest times—to bring His redeemed out of the City of Destruction! God will miss none of His own.

17. *And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.* Perhaps the old man's legs trembled under him. He felt that he could not run so far and, besides, the mountain seemed so bleak and dreary he could not quite quit the abodes of men.

18-21. *And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my lords. Behold now, Your servant has found grace in your sight, and you have magnified your mercy, which you have shown unto me in saying my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape there, (is it*

not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted you concerning this thing, also, that I will not overthrow this city, for you have spoken. I think that I have said to you before that this sparing of Zoar is an instance of the cumulative power of prayer. I may liken Abraham's mighty pleading to a ton weight of prayer—supplication that had a wonderful force and power! Lot's petition is only like an ounce of prayer. Poor little Lot, what a poor little prayer his was! Yet that *ounce* turned the scale. So, it may be that there is some mighty man of God who is near to prevailing with God, but he cannot quite obtain his request—but you, poor feeble pleader that you are—shall add your feather's weight to his great intercession and then the scale will turn! This narrative always comforts me! I think that Zoar was preserved, not so much by the prayer of Lot, as by the greater prayer of Abraham which had gone before, yet the mighty intercession of the friend of God did not prevail until it was supported by the feeble petition of poor Lot.

22. *Hasten you, escape there.* The hand of Justice was held back until God's servant was safe. There can be no destruction of the world, there can be no pouring out of the last plagues, there can be no total sweeping away of the ungodly until, first of all, the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads and taken to a place of security! The Lord will preserve His own. He lets the scaffold stand until the building is finished—then it will come down fast enough.

22-28. *For I cannot do anything till you are come there. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. 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, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.* What must Abraham's meditations have been! What should be the meditations of every godly man as he looks towards Sodom and sees the smoke of its destruction? It might do some men great good if they would not persistently shut their eyes to the doom of the wicked. Look, look, I pray you, upon that place of darkness and woe where every impenitent and unbelieving spirit must be banished forever from the Presence of the Lord! Look till the tears are in your eyes as you thank God that you are rescued from so terrible a doom! Look till your heart melts with pity for the many who are going the downward road and who will eternally ruin themselves unless almighty Grace prevents!

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 CHILD OF LIGHT AND THE WORKS OF DARKNESS
NO. 2401

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 24, 1887.

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
Ephesians 5:11.

SINS, especially the grosser vices, are "works of darkness." They delight in concealment. They are not fit to be seen. They flourish in the darkness of the unrenewed heart. They are most fully maintained in the ignorance of a soul that is without the knowledge of the ever-blessed God. They are also works of darkness because those who follow them have a sad life of it, after all—they are not only dark as to knowledge, but they are dark as to comfort as well! There is no true light, no real joy in sin. "The wages of sin is death." And they are works of darkness, too, because they tend to further darkness—the man who pursues them goes from blackness to a deeper blackness—and in the end his portion will be darkness unbroken by a ray of hope, "the blackness of darkness forever."

You know that darkness stands for the powers of evil, as light is the fit emblem of the holiness of God and of His Infinite goodness and purifying Grace. Well, now, whether we, who are the children of light, are busy or not, it is quite certain that children of darkness work! They are always working—there is no cessation in their activity. Master Latimer used to say that the most diligent bishop in England was the devil, for whoever did not visit his diocese, the devil was always visiting his people! His plow never rusts in the furrow, his sword never rests in its scabbard. The powers of darkness cannot be blamed for their slothfulness—is there ever a moment in which they are not busy and active? Luke warmness never steals over the powers of darkness! The work of the night goes on horribly, there is no pause to it and, therefore, let us who are of the day work, too! God help us to counteract the working of the silent, hidden leaven of sin by our own struggling to produce in the world a better tone of thought and feeling and, by spreading the knowledge of God's Grace and everything which will increase reverence to God and love to men!

The text speaks of the works of darkness and it calls them "unfruitful." So they are, for sin is sterile. It produces its like and multiplies itself, but as for any fruit that is good, any fruit that can elevate and benefit men, any fruit which God can accept and which you and I ought to desire, sin is barren as the desert sand! Nothing good can come of it. Every now and then we hear it said, "Well, you know, on this occasion,

we must set aside the higher laws of equity, because just now it is imperatively necessary that such and such a policy should be pursued." But it is never right, either for an individual, or for a nation to do wrong—and the most fruitful policy for men and for nations is to do that which will bear the Light of God! The works of the Light of God are fruitful works, rich and sweet, and fit to be gathered, pleasant to God and profitable to men! But the works of darkness are fruitless, they come to nothing, they produce no good result. They are like the apples of Sodom which may appear fair to the eyes, but he that plucks them shall find that he has nothing but ashes in his hand! O you who are performing works of darkness, know that no good fruit will come of all your work! You can have nothing that is worth having as the result of all your toil!

My text, which I have just introduced to you by these few remarks, demands our attention as a great practical lesson to Christians "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Those works of darkness which are horrible and unmentionable, you cannot have fellowship with them! They produce a very potent evil to all mankind and, of course, you will avoid them. Pass not by them and flee from them! But you must also keep clear of those works of darkness which apparently seem to be colorless and to produce no particularly evil effect. You, as a Christian, have to live a solemn, earnest, serious life. To you—

"Life is real, life is earnest,"

and if there are works of darkness which do not seem to be as bad as others, but are simply frivolous, foolish and time-wasting, have no fellowship with them! These unfruitful works of darkness are to be avoided by you as much as those which are most defiling. Hear this, you Christians, and God help you to obey the command!

In coming to the consideration of our text, let us enquire, first, *What is forbidden*? Fellowship with "the unfruitful works of darkness." Secondly, let us ask, *What is commanded*? "Reprove them." And thirdly, let us consider, *Why are we to act thus*?

I. First, then, WHAT IS FORBIDDEN? "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." We can have fellowship with them in a great number of ways.

Notice that the text does *not* say, "Have no fellowship with wicked men. Have no dealings with men who are not converted," for then we must necessarily go out of the world. Many of us are obliged to earn our daily bread in the midst of men whom we certainly would not choose for our companions. Many of you, I know, are forced every day to hear language which is disgusting to you and you are brought into contact with modes of procedure which sadden your gracious spirits. Our Savior does not pray that you should be taken out of the world, but that you should be preserved from the evil of it! If you are what you profess to be, you are the salt of the earth, and salt is not meant to be kept in a box, but to be well rubbed into the meat to keep it from putrefaction. We are not to shut ourselves up as select companies of men seeking only our own edification and enjoyment! It is intended that we should mingle with the ungodly so far as our duties demand. We are forced to do so—it is the Lord's intent

that we should, so that we may act as salt among them. God grant that the salt may never lose its savor and that the unsavory world may never destroy the pungency of the piety of God's people! With evil men, then, we must have some kind of fellowship—but with their *works* we are to have no fellowship. In order to avoid this evil, let us see what is here forbidden—"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

And first, dear Friends, we have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness *by personally committing the sins so described*. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." After all, a man must be judged by his life. If you do that which is holy and righteous and gracious, you have fellowship with the holy and the righteous and the gracious. But if you do that which is unclean and dishonest, you have fellowship with the unclean and the dishonest. The Lord will, at the last, put us among those whom we are most like—in that day when He shall separate the people gathered before Him, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats—the sheep will be put with the sheep and the goats with the goats. If you have lived like the wicked, you will die like the wicked and be damned like the wicked! It is only those who live the life of the righteous who can hope that they shall die the death of the righteous.

I, who preach to you with all my heart the Doctrines of the Grace of God, do, nevertheless, just as boldly remind you that the Grace of God brings forth fruit in the life and, where it is really in the heart, there will be in the life that which tokens its presence. If you and I are drunks, if we can do a dishonest action, if we are guilty of falsehood, if we are covetous, (I need not go over the list of all those evil things), then we belong to the class of men who delight in such practices—and with them we must go forever! We are having fellowship with them by doing *as they do* and we shall have an awful fellowship with them at the last by suffering as *they shall suffer*!

God make us holy, then! The very name of Jesus signifies that He will save His people from their sins and He saves them from their sins by their ceasing to commit those sins that others do. His own Word is, "Be you holy, for I am holy." "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." Nothing more dishonors Him than to have a following of unclean men—men who refuse to be washed and resolve not to quit their old sins! Great sinners, yes—the biggest sinners out of Hell—are welcome to come to Christ in order to be cleansed from their sin and set free from it! He keeps a hospital wherein He receives the most sick of all the sick, but it is that He may heal them! And if men do not wish to be healed but count the marks of their disease to be beauty-spots—if they love their sins and hug them to their bosoms—then thus says the Lord to them, "You shall die in your sins." God save all His professing people from this form of fellowship with the works of darkness!

Next, we can have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness *by teaching wrongdoing, either by plain words or by just inference*. Any man whose teaching tends towards unholiness, who directly or indirectly, either by overt phrase or by natural inference, leads another man into sin, is *particeps criminis*, a partaker of the crime! If you teach your children what they ought never to learn. If you teach your fellow workmen what

they had better never know and if they improve upon your lessons, and go much farther than you ever meant that they should—if they proceed from folly to crime—you are a partaker of their sins and you have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. And, believe me, there is nothing more awful than for any minister of Christ to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness by keeping back any part of the Truth of God—by withholding any of the precepts of God's Word, or by denying the terrible and eternal consequences of sin! There is nothing more dreadful than the end of such a man must be! I think that I would sooner die and be judged of God as a murderer of men's bodies, than have to go before the Judgment Seat charged with being the murderer of their souls through having kept back helpful Truths of God, or insinuated destructive and erroneous doctrines! Yes, we can easily have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness in that way.

Further, there are some who will have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness *by constraining, commanding, or tempting others to sin.* How much harm is often done in this respect by lack of thought! What you do by another, you do yourself. If you command another to do for you what you know to be wrong—I will not say that the other is right in the compliance—but I will say that *you are wrong in having given the command.* Let fathers, let masters, let mistresses see to it that they never command *others* to do what God has not commanded *them* to do!

Sometimes it is not actually a command that you give, but you put the person into such a position of temptation and trial that the probabilities are that that person will do wrong—and if it is so—in the sight of God you will have to share the guilt of that wrong! When a master pays his servant less wages than he ought to have—if that servant commits a theft, I condemn the theft, but I cannot *clear the master* who put the man into a position in which he must have been sorely tempted to take something more to make up for that of which he had been defrauded! I do not excuse the theft by him who committed it, but, still, I cannot screen the one who put the other where, in all probability, he would be driven to commit a dishonest act. If I place a man in a position where it is most probable, seeing that human nature is what it is, that he will commit a sin. If I have wantonly put him there, or put him there for my own profit and gain, I shall be a partaker of the sin if he falls!

If you are a nurse girl and you take those little children and set them on the edge of the cliff, letting them go to the very brink of it—and they fall over, you cannot clear yourself of blame in the matter! It may be that you told the children not to go too close to the edge, but then you put them where you might be morally certain that, as children, they would go—and you are responsible for all that happens to them. So, if I set another in a place where I might be able to stand, myself, but might be pretty sure that he could not, I shall be a partaker of his sin. "Well, I drink my glass of wine," says one. Yes, and apparently it does you no harm, whatever—you have never been excited by it, and you feel grateful for it—but there is another man who could not do as you have done without becoming a drunk and, by your example he is made a drunk and helped to remain so. The practice may be safe enough for you, but if it is

ruinous to him, take heed lest you be a partaker of his unfruitful works of darkness!

It will require great care and some self-denial, so to act towards others that we can say when we go to bed at night, "If any man has done a wrong thing, today, it is not because I have set him the example." Oh, that we might all repent of other people's sins! Did you ever repent of them? "I have had enough to do to repent of my own sins," says one. But these sins of which I am speaking *are your own,* as well as other people's, if you have led others into the way of committing the sin, or have put any pressure upon them to lead them to commit the sin! You are having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness!

Sometimes men get to be partakers of others' sins *by provoking them*. When fathers provoke their children to anger, who has the chief blame of that sin? Surely the father has! And when, sometimes, persons purposely play upon the infirmities of others to provoke them, are they not more to blame than the offenders? I am sure that it is so. I have known some try to draw others out when they have known their propensity to go beyond the truth—they have, for mirth's sake, led them on and tempted them to lie! Who is the greater sinner of the two in such a case as that? I am no casuist and shall not attempt to weigh actions, but I am able to say this most assuredly, that, if you provoke another to anger, that anger is, in part, your sin! If you wantonly incite another to sin by daring him to do it, or by any other method of tempting him to do wrong, you, yourself, shall share the accusation at the Last Great Day.

Further, Friends, we can be partakers of the unfruitful works of darkness *by counseling them*. There are some men who will not do the wrong things, themselves, but they will give evil advice to others and so lead them into iniquity. We have known persons act the part of the cat with the monkey—they have used some other hand to draw the chestnuts from the fire. They were not themselves burned, but, then, they really did the deed by their agents. Theirs was the advice, theirs the wit, theirs the shrewd hard-headedness by which the evil was done! And though they did not appear in the transaction, yet God saw them and He will reckon with them in the Day of Account.

I feel very jealous of myself when I have to give advice—and that experience often falls to my lot. A person will plead, "Well, if I do right in such a case as this, I shall remain in poverty, or I shall lose my job. If I follow out my conscientious convictions to the fullest, who is to provide for me?" And, you know, the temptation is to feel, "Well, now, really, we must not be too severe in our judgment upon this poor soul. Can we not agree with the evident wish of the person asking the advice, moderate the Law of God, or, in some way make a loophole, and say, Well, it will not be *right*, but, still, you see, *under the circumstances*___."

Now, I never dare do that, because, if wrong is done and I have counseled it, I shall be a partaker in the wrong! You who are called to give advice to others—as many of you may be by reason of your age and experience—always give straight advice. Never let any man learn policy from you. Of all things in this world, that which often commends itself to certain "prudent" men, but which, nevertheless, never ought to commend

itself to Christians, is the idea of doing a little evil in order to obtain a great good! In fact, what we are doing is believing ourselves to be wiser than the commands of God and imagining that strict truth, honesty and integrity would, after all, not be the best thing for men, even though God has so ordained! Let us so guide others that we shall have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness!

But we may have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness *by consenting to them and tolerating them*. For instance, you live in a house where there is a great deal of evil going on and you, yourself, stay clear of it. So far so good. But you *never* protest against it—you have been altogether silent about it. "Mum," has been the word with you and, sometimes, when they come home from a place of evil resort and they tell you about the "fun" they have had, you laugh with the rest! Or if you do not laugh, at any rate you have not decidedly expressed your disapproval. You do disapprove of the evil in secret—you even pray against it—but nobody knows that! The wrongdoers, especially, are not aware that it is so. In fact, they fancy that, as they treat leniently *your* pursuit of *religion*, though they think it cant, so you treat leniently *their* pursuit of *sin*—though in your heart of hearts you believe that pursuit to be evil!

Our Lord commands us to clear ourselves of all toleration of sin—not with harshness, not with denunciation and in an unkind spirit—but with a mild, gentle, but still powerful, honest rebuke. We must say, especially if we are parents, or masters, or persons having much influence with others, "Oh, do not this abominable thing! I cannot have any share in this evil, even by silently tolerating it. How I wish that you would give it up! I entreat you, come out of this Sodom—escape for your lives!" A few more loving home testimonies for God and who can tell but that the husband may be converted, and the son may be led to the Savior? But for lack of this personal witness among Christians, I am afraid that the Church of God comes to be paralyzed and much of her power and usefulness is taken from her. Do not let us tolerate or wink at sin in any instance, whatever!

Far be it from us, also, to ever have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness *by commending or applauding sin, or seeming to agree with it*. We must let all men know that whatever they may do which has about it an ill savor, it has an ill savor to us and we cannot endure it. We must always protest against it, lest we be partakers of the sins of others. O dear Friends, I believe that the great lack of the Church just now is holiness! The great need of the Church is nonconformity! I mean nonconformity to the world! We must endeavor to bring back the strictness of the Puritan times and somewhat more. Everybody is so liberal and takes such latitude, nowadays, that in some quarters it is impossible to tell which is the Church and which is the world! I have even heard some ministers propose that there should be no Church distinct from the congregation, but that everybody would be a Church-member, without the slightest examination, or even a profession of conversion!

It is supposed that people are now so generally good that we may take them indiscriminately and that they will make a Church quite good enough for the Lord Jesus Christ! Ah, me, that is not according to

Christ's mind, and that is not Christ's teaching! God's call to this age, as to all that went before, is, "Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Bear your protest, my Brothers and Sisters, against everything that is unrighteous and unholy—everything that is not God-like and Christ-like—and let your lives be such that men shall not need to ask to whom you belong, whether to God or to the devil, but they shall see at once that you are the people of the ever-living and blessed God!

This, then, is what is forbidden—"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

II. The time flies so fast that I can only very briefly answer the second question, WHAT IS COMMANDED? "Reprove them." Our life's business in the world comprehends this among our other Christian duties—the reproving of the unfruitful works of darkness.

First, *we are to rebuke sin*. I find that the word which is here rendered, "reprove," is that which is used concerning the Holy Spirit—"When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." We are, therefore, so to live as to let the Light of God in upon men's consciences that we may rebuke them for their sin!

But we are also to try to let the sinners, themselves, see the sinfulness of their sin, to let the Light in upon the sin and, by God's Grace, so to reprove them as *to convict them of sin*—to make them feel, from the testimony of God's people, that sin is an evil and a bitter thing—and that their course of conduct is that evil thing. The Light of God has come into the world on purpose that the darkness may know that it is darkness and that God's Light may overcome and disperse it. We are not to quench our Light and mingle with others who are in the dark, but to unveil our lamps and let the Light that is in them so shine that the darkness shall thereby be reproved! I do not say, Brothers and Sisters, that we are to go through the world wearing surly faces, looking grim as death, perpetually promulgating the Law of God and saying, "You shall not do this and you shall not do that." But, cheerful as we must be with the Love of God in our hearts, we shall prove to men that the freest and the happiest life is a life of holiness, a life of consecration to God and *that*, together with the faithful testimony of our lips, shall be a reproving of the sin that is in the world. The very existence of a true Believer is the reproof of unbelief! The existence of an honest man is the reproof of knavery! The existence of a godly man is the best reproof of ungodliness! But when that existence is backed up by verbal testimony and by a consistent example, then the command in the text is fulfilled, for we are reproving the unfruitful works of darkness.

III. Thirdly, let us ask, WHY ARE WE TO ACT THUS? Why are we sent into the world, dear Friends, to reprove sin and not to follow in its track? The reasons are given in this very chapter.

First, *because we are God's dear children and, therefore, we must be imitators of Him*. You, a child of God, and having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? You, a child of God, imitating the lost and

fallen world? You, a child of God, submitting to the influences of the devil and his filthy crew? Far be it from you! Ask your Father to make you holy as He is holy. To that end were you born and sent into the world—entreat your Father to help you to fulfill the very purpose of your being!

Next, remember that *we who are Believers have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God.* We are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Well, then, shall we have fellowship with those who have no inheritance in this Kingdom? Remember what we read just now—"For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God." And will you, who have a part in this inheritance, make common lot with such people? Oh, be it far from you! Heir of Glory, will you be a companion of the heirs of wrath? Joint-heir with Christ, will you sit on the drunk's bench, or sing an unclean song with the profane? Are their places of amusement fit for you to frequent? Are their dens of iniquity haunts for you? Up and away from the dwellings of these wicked men and women lest you are destroyed in their destruction!

A little further down in the chapter, in the seventh and eighth verses, we read—"Be not you, therefore, partakers with them. For *you were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord.*" What? Has a marvelous conversion happened to you? Have you been turned from darkness to light? Are you really new creatures in Christ Jesus, or is it all a lie? For if, indeed, you have been twice-born, if you have had a resurrection from among the dead, if a second creation has been worked in you, how can you go and live with these dead men and mingle with these who know not the life of God? Unless your profession is nothing but a farce or a fraud, Grace will so constrain you that you must come out and refuse to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness!

The text describes these works as being unfruitful and you read, in the ninth verse, "*The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.*" Now, if you are to bear the fruits of the Spirit, what fellowship can you have with the unfruitful works of darkness? The two things are opposed to one another! You fruit-bearing trees, are you going to join in affinity with these cumber-grounds that soon must be cut down and cast into the fire? What? Will you interlace your vine branches with these fig trees that have leaves upon them, but no fruit, and upon which no fruit will ever grow, for they are under the curse of God? No, it must not be so! People of God, serve Him and come away from those who render Him no service, but who rather seek to pull down His holy Temple, and to destroy His name and influence from among the sons of men!

The Apostle gives us one more reason why we should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—"*for it is a shame, even, to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.*" What? Shall we have fellowship with things of which we are ashamed, even, to speak? Yet I have to say it and to say it to my own sorrow and horror—I have known professors to have fellowship with things that I dare not even think of now! They have been found out at last—some of them were never found out till after they were dead. What a life to lead—to sit with God's people at the Communion Table! To talk, even, to others about the way of salva-

tion, yet all the while living in the practice of secret sin! Why, surely, it were better to get into prison at once than to be always afraid of being caught! To go up and down the world making a profession of religion and yet to be acting a lie all the while, and living in constant fear of being found out! Whatever sin we may fall into, God save us from hypocrisy and make us honest and straightforward in all things! Shall we, then, go and have fellowship with things of which we should be ashamed, even, to speak? God forbid!

I am afraid that I am speaking many Truths of God that you will regard as having nothing in them that is comfortable to you, but, Brothers and Sisters, can I help it? Can it be avoided? If we are to make full proof of our ministry and preach *all* the Truth to you, must we not take every passage of God's Word, whether it is of rebuke or of comfort, in its due season? To myself, the effect of thinking over this subject is this—I have cried, "Lord, have mercy upon me." I have fled, again, to the Cross of Christ. I have sought anew for an anointing of the Holy Spirit that I might not, in *anything*, have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. And if my discourse has that effect upon you, it will do you great service! Oh, ask the Lord to make our outward lives more thoroughly pure and true! Give me a little Church of really gracious, devoted, upright, godly men, and I will be glad to minister to them and I shall expect God to bless them!

But give me a large Church consisting of thousands, if there are in it many whose lives, if they were known, would disgust a man of God, and whose lives, being known to the Spirit of God, are a grief to Him, why, then the blessing must be withheld! We may preach our hearts out and wear ourselves to death in all kinds of holy service, but, with an Achan in the camp, Israel cannot win the victory! I beseech you, therefore, search and look! One pair of eyes, two pairs of eyes in the pastorate, and the eyes of the elders and deacons of the Church can never suffice to watch over such a company as this is! The Lord watch over you, and may you have a mutual oversight of one another! And, above all, may each one exercise daily watchfulness over his own heart and life! Thus, beloved Brothers and Sisters Christ, I leave the text with you, praying God to bless it—"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

Now, if any here are living in fellowship with those unfruitful works of darkness, I pray them to escape for their lives from them! May they fly to Christ, who alone can save them! And when they have once found healing through His wounds and life through His death, then let them pray to be kept from all sin that they may lead a holy and gracious life to the glory of Him who has washed them in His own most precious blood! The Lord send a blessing, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 5.

Verse 1. *Be you, therefore, followers of God.* Or, imitators of God—

1. *As dear children.* Children are naturally imitators. They are usually inclined to imitate their father. This is, therefore, a most comely and appropriate precept—

"Be you, therefore, imitators of God, as dear children."

2. *And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us, an offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.* What a path to walk in! "Walk in love." What a well-paved way it is! "As Christ also has loved us." What a blessed Person for us to follow in that divinely royal road! It would have been hard for us to tread this way of love if it had not been that His blessed feet marked out the trail for us. We are to love as Christ has loved us and the question which will often solve difficulties is this, "What would Jesus Christ do in my case? What He would have done, that we may do—"Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us." And if we want to know how far that love may be carried, we need not be afraid of going too far in self-denial. We may even make a sacrifice of ourselves for love of God and men, for here is our model—"As Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us, an offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor."

3. *But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints.* So far from ever falling under the power of these evils, do not even *name* them—count them sins unmentionable to holy ears! In what a position do we find, "covetousness," placed—side by side with, "fornication and all uncleanness"! In the Epistle to the Colossians, covetousness is called, "idolatry," as if the Holy Spirit thought so ill of this sin that He could never put it in worse company than it deserved to be in! Yet I fear it is a very common sin even among some who call themselves saints. God deliver us altogether from its sway and help us to hate the very name of it!

4. *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather, giving of thanks.* All sorts of evil, frivolous, fruitless talk should be condemned by the Christian. He should feel that he lives at a nobler rate, he lives to purpose—he lives to bear fruit—and that which has no fruit about it and out of which no good can come is not for him. "But rather, giving of thanks." Oh, for more of this giving of thanks! It should perfume the labors of the day! It should sweeten the rest of the night, this giving of thanks! We are always receiving blessings—let us never cease to give God thanks for them. If we never leave off thanking until we are beyond the need of blessing, we shall go on praising the Lord as long as we live, here, and continue to do so throughout eternity!

5. *For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.* What a sweeping sentence! This is, indeed, a sword with two edges! Many will flinch before it and yet, though they flinch, they will not escape, for Paul speaks neither more nor less than the Truth when he declares that "no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God."

6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* These are the

very things God hates! If, therefore, they are in you, God cannot look upon you with the love that He feels towards His children. "These things" He cannot endure and, "because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

7, 8. *Be not you, therefore, partakers with them. For you were sometimes darkness.* Then, "these things" suited you.

8. *But now are you light in the Lord: walk as children of light.* Get clean away from these dark things! Travel no more in the thick gloom of these abominations! God help you to walk in the Light as He is in the Light!

9, 10. *(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.* We ought to pray that our whole life may be "acceptable unto the Lord." We are, ourselves, "accepted in the Beloved." And, that being the case, it should be our great desire that every thought and word and deed, yes, every breath of our life should be "acceptable unto the Lord."

11, 12. *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame, even, to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.* It was so with the old heathen world in which Paul lived—he could not write or speak of those abominable vices which defiled the age. But is London any better than Ephesus? Surely, old Corinth, which became a sink of sin, was not a worse Sodom than this great modern Babylon! There is great cause to say of the wicked, even to this day, "It is a shame, even, to speak of those things which are done by them in secret."

13. *But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light.* Then drag them to the Light of God! There will be a great howling when these dogs of darkness have the Light let in upon them, but it has to be done.

13-15. *For whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says, Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. See, then, that you walk circumspectly.* Not carelessly, not thinking that it is of no importance how you live, but looking all around you, "walk circumspectly," watching lest, even in seeking one good thing, you spoil another. Never present to God one duty stained with the blood of another duty! "See then that you walk circumspectly."

15, 16. *Not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.* Buying up the hours—they are of such value that you cannot pay too high a price for them!

16-18. *Because the days are evil. Therefore be you not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.* If you want excitement, seek this highest, holiest, happiest form of exhilaration—the Divine exhilaration which only the Holy Spirit can give you—"Be filled with the Spirit."

19. *Speaking to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.* We would have thought that Paul would have said, "singing and making melody with your voices to the Lord," but the Apostle, guided by the Holy Spirit, overlooks the sound, which is the mere body of the praise, and looks to the

heart, which is the living soul of the praise—"Making melody in your heart to the Lord," for the Lord cares not merely for sounds, though they are the sweetest that ever came from the lips of man or angel—He looks at the heart. God is a Spirit and He looks spiritually at our spiritual praises—therefore let us make melody in our heart to the Lord.

20, 21. *Giving thanks, always, for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves, one to another, in the fear of God.* That principle of maintaining your rights, standing up for your dignity and so on, is not according to the mind of the Spirit! It is His will that you should, rather, yield your rights and, for the sake of peace, and the profit of your Brothers and Sisters, give up what you might naturally claim as properly belonging to you—"Submitting yourselves, one to another, in the fear of God."

22-30. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ's is the Head of the Church and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands, in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord, the Church; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.* What a wonderful expression! To think that we, poor creatures that we are, should be thus joined to Christ by a marriage union, no, by a *vital union*—is, indeed, amazing! Oh, the depths of the love of Christ, that such an expression as this should be possible!

31, 32. *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. There* is the mystery, that He should leave His Father, and quit the home above, and become one flesh with His elect, going with them and for their sakes, through poverty, pain, shame and death! This is a marvel and a mystery, indeed!

33. *Nevertheless, let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.* Thus the Spirit of God follows us to our homes and teaches us how to live to the Glory of God! May He help us to do so, for Christ's sake! 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.

UNDER ARREST
NO. 2402

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 3, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING MARCH 3, 1887.

"But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."
Galatians 3:23.

THIS is a condensed history of the Jews before the Gospel was fully preached to them. Before the clear and plain revelation of the way of salvation—that is to say, before Jesus Christ, Himself, actually appeared among the sons of men—the Hebrew nation was put under the tutorship and governance of the Mosaic Law. So far as salvation was to be obtained by it, that Law was a total failure. It did not make the Jews a holy people—whenever they reached any point of excellence, they soon went back from it, for they were bent on backsliding. Whatever the influence of that blessed Law might be supposed to be, the actual net result was very poor, indeed, for, when Christ came to the chosen people, they were in a most miserable condition, and there was no hope for them at all apart from the promised Messiah. They were shut up to the alternative of receiving Him, or else being put away as a nation for a long time of banishment and exile. This, indeed, they have actually endured through their rejection of the one and only Savior.

I am not going to preach at this time about the Jews, but I want to show you that the history of every soul chosen of God is very like the history of the chosen nation. I have heard of masses of crystal which assume certain forms and, if they are split up, again and again, however small the particles may be, the same crystalline shape remains—the crystals are still of one form! So, if you take a nation as a mass, its spiritual history will be found in each individual and often every experience of that individual will still bear the same shape and outline. I take this text, therefore, as being, I am sure, a picture of myself. Before faith came, I was, "kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." And my impression is that this is the history of *all* the people of God, more or less. We are not all alike in every respect. We differ greatly in certain particulars, yet the main features of all the children of God will be found to be the same—and their Christian experience will resemble that of the other members of the Lord's family.

So I shall leave the text as a matter of history of the Jews and use it as the life-story of many here present! Perhaps while I am explaining the experience of the child of God, there may be some, here, who are passing through the darker stages of that experience, who may gather hope from that fact and say, "I see that my spot is the spot of the Lord's children.

Possibly, my soul-trouble, being like theirs, may be producing in me the same result as it produced in them." And thus, I trust, while I am speaking, some may be led into a clearer light and may even come into the full light of God's reconciled Countenance!

There are three things that I am going to talk about as the Holy Spirit shall guide me. The first is, *the unhappy period*—it was long ago with some of us—the unhappy period "before faith came." Secondly, I shall describe *the custody we were in at that time*—"we were kept under the Law, shut up." That is where we were when the spirit of bondage was holding us in captivity "before faith came." Then, thirdly, I shall have a little to say upon *the revelation which set us free*—"the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

I. First, then, I have to say something about THE UNHAPPY PERIOD. "Before faith came." As I said just now, this period was long ago with some of us, but it was not so far back with others of you, "before faith came."

We remember, some of us, when we *had no idea of faith.* We were, in a measure, religiously inclined, and in a certain way, sincere and devout. As a matter of duty, we went to Church, or we went to the Meeting House, and we felt easy in our mind because we had been there. As a matter of duty, we read our Bibles and, sometimes, we felt a pleasure in getting through the chapter—perhaps we had all the more pleasure if the chapter was not a long one! We did not object to family prayer—it may be that we had been used to it from our childhood. The less we had of it, the better we liked, it but still, we kept to it, although it was always only a matter of duty.

As to *saving* faith, we had not an intelligent idea of it. Our notion was that good people would get to Heaven and that we must do our best to make ourselves fit to be in that holy place. We had a great many shortcomings and failures, no doubt, but in some mysterious way we fancied that all would get rectified and we would be all right if we were only sincere. Many still seem to imagine that it does not matter what persons believe as long as they are sincere, nor what they do so long as they are conscientious in doing it. That was our notion, but as to any idea of there being a faith peculiar to God's elect, a faith which saves the soul by linking us to the Savior—if anyone had talked to us in *that* fashion—we would have said, "Yes, that is, no doubt, orthodox teaching—we have heard that Martin Luther taught that doctrine at the time of the Reformation, but what he meant by it, we have not the slightest idea!" We did not know. We had not formed any idea of that which, had we known it, would have been the chief joy of our minds and hearts—in that unhappy period we had no idea of faith.

Some of us used to hear the Gospel. Some of us did not. But, whether we heard the Gospel or not, "*before faith came,*" *we did not know what it was*. I have no doubt that I heard, hundreds of times, such texts as these—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But

I still had no intelligent idea of what faith meant. When I first discovered what faith really was, and exercised it, for with me these two things came together, I believed as soon as I knew what believing meant. And then I thought I had never heard that Truth of God preached before! But, on looking back, I am persuaded that the Light of God often shone in my eyes, but I was blind and, therefore, I thought that the Light had never come. The Light was shining all the while, but there was no power to receive it—the eyeballs of the soul were not sensitive to the Divine beams!

Perhaps some of you did *not* hear the Gospel, for it is by no means a difficult thing to attend a place of worship year after year, and yet not hear the Gospel. I am sorry that it should be so, but I know that it is so—there is a great deal of preaching that may be edifying to Christians, a great deal that is morally excellent—but the way of salvation by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often regarded by the preacher as a Truth of God too elementary to be introduced to the notice of a congregation so intelligent and so experienced as the one he is privileged to address! This is a great mistake for any minister to make. The Lord's command to Moses was, "With all your offerings you shall offer salt," and His injunction to all His servants, now, is, "With all your teaching, preach the simple doctrine of faith in Christ Crucified." I delight to cry, with the Apostle Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," and it is my constant joy to preach that simple doctrine of, "Believe, and live." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But whether people heard the Gospel or did not hear it, I know that it has often been the case that "before faith came" no idea of what faith is had penetrated the soul! Much was heard *about* it, but nothing was understood. Much, in some respects, was understood about the doctrine, but faith, itself, was still unknown.

And, beloved Brothers and Sisters, as it is that before faith comes we have no idea of it, and we do not understand it, so *we have been puzzled to think of what it could be when we have seen it in others*. We have heard of others, we have read of others and the most of us have seen others who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And we have wished that we could do the same. We have looked upon their experience as some extraordinary secret, some marvelous mystery, some special manifestation—and we have said to ourselves, "We can never reach that height on which those people stand." So we have continued our Chapel going, our Bible reading and so forth, under the notion that faith was something quite impossible for us.

We have thought of it as if it were some precious diamond that kings and queens might buy, but it was not for poor people like us. Though we have been told over and over again, that—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One,"

we have said, "Yes, life for a look, ah, yes! No doubt that is true, but I cannot look." And so we have still turned away from the one hope of salvation! Perhaps we have been still further pressed by some earnest spirit and the Truth has been made as plain as a pikestaff, yet we still could not think that the speaker really meant what he said—there must be some strange mystery at the back of it all. We asked ourselves—"How do

people obtain faith? Of course, it is simple enough to those who understand it, but as for us poor souls who do not comprehend it, how can we get to know what it means and how can we obtain it for ourselves?" That was the puzzled condition in which we were "before faith came." We were just in that kind of state, so that, even when we *wished* to believe, it seemed to us as if it was something altogether beyond our reach.

There was also a time with us, dear Friends, when "before faith came" in its healing and comforting power, *a measure of faith came to wound, cut and kill.* We saw our sin, we felt our need of a Savior and we believed so far as this—that Christ was a Savior, that He was *the* Savior, and that He could save us. But our difficulty was like that of the woman in the crowd who tried to touch the hem of Christ's garment—how could we get in *contact* with Him? What could we *do* to be saved? Oh, the many times that I have wished the preacher would tell me something to *do* that I might be saved! Gladly would I have done it, if it had been possible. If he had said, "Take off your shoes and stockings, and run to John O'Groat's," I would not even have gone home, first, but would have started off that very night, that I might win salvation! How often have I thought that if they had said, "Bare your back to the scourge and take 50 lashes!" I would have said, "Here I am! Come along with your whip and beat as hard as you please, so long as I can but obtain peace and rest, and get rid of my sin."

Yet that simplest of all matters—believing in Christ Crucified, accepting His finished salvation, being *nothing* and letting Him be *everything*, *doing* nothing but *trusting* to what He has done—I could not get a hold of it at all! I might truthfully say that I have known many who, after years of what I think was very sincere and earnest hearing, still remain just the same, apparently willing, but really *unwilling* to believe! They wish to know the way of salvation—and the road is open right straight before them—yet they no not experimentally know the way of life, the only way by which a man can be eternally saved! I am speaking, at this time, I do not doubt, to many who are still in that fog, still bewildered, and knowing not which way to turn, albeit that from this platform there sounds forth that clarion note and nothing else, "Look to Jesus and live! Believe in Him. Trust in Him and you shall be saved at once, yes, saved *eternally*, from the moment that you have done with self and, by faith, have laid hold on Christ!"

Why is it that people do not believe? I suppose it is, partly, because they are so proud. You, my Friend, have a proud notion in your head that there is, after all, something due from God to you! In truth, there is nothing due from God to you but that He should let you perish in your sin—that is all He owes you! You have so sinned against Him that if He should, at this moment, cast you into the lowest Hell, it is all that you have any right to expect! And He will have you know this and make you feel it before He will speak a word of blessing to your soul. You are too high and mighty to be saved as you are—you must come down from that lofty position. This, then, is one reason why men do not "believe and live," because they are too proud to be saved by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Besides, salvation by believing seems so strange, so amazing, so contrary to the usual run of human opinion and, in addition, it is so *spiritual* that the natural man rebels against it. If it were but a carnal thing, something to be done with the hands, or performed with the feet, we could do *that*—but the *spiritual* action of *believing*, the action which honors God by taking salvation as the free gift of His Grace and mercy—we cannot bend our backs and stoop so low as that! The fact is that it is difficult because it is easy! It is difficult because there is no difficulty in it and it seems obscure simply because it is so clear! There is nothing for you to do, O lost Sinner, but to yield yourself up to your God and accept His Sovereign Mercy which He freely gives you in the Person of His dear Son! Still, though I have said all this so plainly, you do not believe me—you do not yet understand what I mean, unless you have been taught of the Spirit! That, then, is how we were in the unhappy period "before faith came."

II. Now I want to show you, in a few words, THE CUSTODY WE WERE IN. "Before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up." The word for, "kept," means that we were arrested and given in charge, or that we were taken under the care of a garrison. The Ten Commandments of God, like ten armed legionaries, took us into custody and held us fast. "Before faith came, we were kept under the Law." How was that?

When the Spirit of God began to deal with us, we found that *we were always within the sphere of Law*—we could not get out of it. We woke in the morning—there was the Law right in front of us. All during the day—there was the Law right before our eyes. If we went to sleep at night—there was the Law—we were everywhere under the Law. We said, with David, "Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence?" When once we recognized God and realized the fact that we were His creatures, there came into our startled conscience the remembrance of the universality of Law!

I remember that experience and how I thought of what was said of the old Roman empire that, under the rule of Caesar, if a man once broke the law of Rome, he was in prison everywhere! The whole *world* was one vast prison to him, for he could not get out of the reach of the imperial power—and so did it come to be in my awakened conscience! Wherever I went, the Law of God had a demand upon my thoughts, upon my words, upon my rising, upon my resting. What I did and what I did not do, all came under the cognizance of the Law—and then I found that this Law so surrounded me that I was always running against it! I was always breaking it! I seemed as if I were a sinner and nothing else but a sinner. If I opened my mouth, I spoke amiss. If I sat still, there was sin in my silence. I remember that when the Spirit of God was thus dealing with me, I used to feel myself to be a sinner, even, when I was in the House of God! I thought that when I sang, I was mocking the Lord with a solemn sound upon a false tongue! And if I *prayed*, I feared that I was sinning in my prayers, insulting Him by uttering confessions which I did not feel and asking for mercies with a faith that was not at all true, but only another form of unbelief! Oh, yes, some of us know what it is to be given

into custody to the Law! Perhaps some here are now in this condition without quite understanding it.

At that time, when I was in the custody of the Law, *I did not take any pleasure in sin*! Alas, I sinned, but my sense of the Law of God kept me back from a great many sins. I could not, as others did, plunge into profligacy, or indulge in any of the grosser vices, for that Law had me well in hand! I sinned enough without acting like that. Oh, I used to tremble to put one foot before another, for fear I would do wrong! I felt that my old sins seemed to be so many that it were well to die rather than commit any more! The Law of God, when it gets a man into its charge, makes him feel just like that.

Then, *I could not find any rest* while under the custody of the Law. If I wanted to sleep a while, or to be a little indifferent and careless, then some one or other of those Ten Commandments roughly awakened me and, looking on me with a frowning face, said, "You have broken me!" I thought that I would do some good works but, somehow, the Law always broke my good works in the making. I fancied that if my tears flowed freely, I might make some recompense for my wrongdoing, but the Law held up the mirror and I soon saw my face all smeared and made more unhandsome by my tears. The Law of God shut me up in all directions and would not let me rest anywhere when I was under its custody.

Then, also, *the Law seemed to blight all my hopes*. I hoped this and I hoped that—but then the Law said, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." And I knew I had not continued in all those things, so I saw myself accursed, turn which way I might! I had offended against the justice of God! I was impure and polluted! And I used to say, "If God does not send me to Hell, He ought to." I sat in judgment upon myself and pronounced the sentence that I felt would be just. I could not have gone to Heaven with my sin unpardoned, even if I had had the offer to do it, for I knew that it would not be right that I should do so—I justified God in my own conscience while I condemned myself!

One thing I found concerning the Law, that *it would not even let me despair*. If I thought I would give up all desire to do right and just go and drown my conscience in sin, the Law said, "No, you cannot do that, there is no rest for you in sinning. You know the Law too well to be able to sin in the blindness of a seared conscience." So the Law worried and troubled me at all points—it shut me up as in an iron cage—every way of escape was effectually blocked up!

I am talking now, not only of my own experience, but also of the experience of many another child of God. I will tell you one or two of the things that shut me up dreadfully. One was when I knew the spirituality of the Law. If the Law said, "You shall not commit adultery," I said to myself, "Well, I have never committed adultery." Then the Law, as interpreted by Christ, said, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her, already, in his heart." The Law said, "You shall not steal," and I said, "Well, I never stole anything." but then I found that even the *desire* to possess what was not my own was guilt! The spirituality of the Law astounded me! What hope could I have of es-

caping from such a Law as this which in every way surrounded me with an atmosphere from which I could not possibly escape?

Then, as I have already reminded you, the Law informed me that I was cursed unless I continued in all things that were written in the Book of the Law, so that, if I had not committed one sin, that made no difference if I had committed another sin, for I was under the curse. What if I had never blasphemed God with my tongue? Yet, if I had coveted, I had broken the Law. He who breaks a chain might say, "I did not break that link, or the other link." No, but if you break *one* link, you have broken the chain! Ah, me, how I then seemed shut up!

Then I remembered that, even if I kept the Law perfectly, and kept it for ten, twenty, or thirty years without a fault, yet if, at the end of that time, I should *then* break it, I must suffer its dread penalty! Those words spoken by the Lord to the Prophet Ezekiel came to my mind—"If he trusts to his own righteousness and commits iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he has committed, he shall die for it." So I saw that I was, as the text says, "shut up." I had hoped to escape this way, or that way, or some other way. Was I not "christened" when I was a child? Had I not been taken to a place of worship? Had I not been brought up to regularly say my prayers? Had I not been an honest, upright, moral youth? Was all this nothing? "Nothing," said the Law, as it drew its sword of fire! "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." So there was no rest for my spirit, no, not even for a moment.

What was I to do? I was in the custody of one that showed no mercy whatever, for Moses never said, "Mercy." The Law has nothing to do with mercy! That comes from another mouth and under another dispensation. But before I turn to that other point, I would like to say that if any of you are passing through all that I have been describing, do not be at all discouraged! I rejoice that it is so with you, for this breaking down of the idols is the way to set up the true God in your heart! This cleaning out of your refuges of lies is a blessed work of God who loves you, though He seems, now, to be dealing out to you the blows of a cruel one! This is the way in which He is severing you from your deceptions, freeing you from your delusions so that He may bring you to His Truth and to Himself! That is my last point.

III. THE REVELATION WHICH SET US FREE—"We were shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

Now let me tell the story. It was on a day, never to be forgotten, when I first understood that *salvation was in and through Another*—that my salvation could not be of *myself*—but must be through One better and stronger than I. And I heard—and oh, what music it was that the Son of God had taken upon Himself our human nature and had, by His life and death, worked out a perfect salvation, finished from top to bottom, which He was ready to give to every soul that was willing to have it—and that salvation was all of Grace from first to last, the free gift of God through His blessed Son, Jesus Christ! Oh, the melody of that doctrine! "But I have heard that lots of times," says one. Have you ever heard it at all? "Why, I heard you say it just now!" Again I put the question—Have you

heard it? It has passed your ears, but have you ever *heard* it? Have you ever caught the meaning of it?

Then I had this vision—not a vision to my eyes, but to my heart. *I saw what a Savior Christ was*—Divine as well as Human! I saw what sufferings His were, what a righteousness His was. I saw the fullness of Christ, the Glory of Christ, the Love of Christ, the Power of Christ to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by Him!

Now I can never tell you how it was, but I no sooner saw whom I was to believe than *I also understood what it was to believe* and I believed in one moment! As much as if it had never been revealed to any mortal man, or written in this blessed Book, it was revealed to me by the Spirit of God that I, guilty wretch as I was, was then and there to fall at those dear feet that once were nailed to the Cross, and to take Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior—and that the moment I did so, I would be saved!

I did take Him as my Savior and I am saved! And I come to tell you, again tonight, *the reason why I took Him for my Savior.* To my own humiliation, I must confess that I did it because I could not help it—I was shut up to it. That Law-work, of which I told you, had hammered me into such a condition that if there had been 50 other saviors, I could not have thought of them! I was driven to this One—I needed a Divine Savior—I needed One who was made a curse for me to expiate my guilt! I needed One who had died, for I deserved to die. I needed One who had risen again, who was able, by His life, to make me live! I needed the exact Savior that stood before me in the Word of God, revealed to my heart—and I could not help having Him!

And, what is more, I cannot help still having Him as my Savior—I am shut up to it! I think I have told you of an American Brother who sat in one of the pews behind me, one Sunday night. When I went out, I said to him, "What? You, here again?" He said, "Yes, it is 20 years since I sat in this pew. I wondered if you would remember me." I said, "Oh, yes, I do remember your face right well!" He said, "You are still hitched in the old place, I see." "Yes," I replied, "and if God spares you to come in another 20 years' time, and I have not gone to Heaven, meanwhile, you will find that I am hitched in the same old place, then, too!"

I have nothing to tell of but Christ Crucified! Nothing to say to the sinner but, "Away, away, away from all other confidences, to Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin!" I want the Law to shut you right up to this one course. If a man were to ask, "Why do you go out of the Tabernacle by the right hand door?" it would be a very good answer if you had to say, "Because all the rest are bricked up." That would be a valid reason, would it not? You had no choice in the matter—and that is the reason why we come to Christ—because we have tried, and proved, and known that there is none other salvation, for, "there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The Law has shut us up to this one road! It has stopped up every other opening and gangway—and we are driven to stand here, and say—

"You, O Christ, are all I need!
More than all, in You I find."

Now, if there are any of you who have gotten into that position, I am right glad of it! This proves that you are God's child! He has chosen you, He loves you, He has given His Son to save you! Take the Lord Jesus Christ to be everything to you and go on your way rejoicing! "Before faith came," you were shut up, but you were shut up to faith in Christ! And now you have that faith, you are shut up no longer, you have received the liberty with which Christ makes His people free! Go home and enjoy it—and if you meet any other poor soul shut up as you were, tell how you came out to liberty! Do not be satisfied to go to your bed, tonight, without having told somebody of how the Lord Jesus came, dressed in garments dipped in blood, and with His pierced hands broke the bars of brass and cut the doors of iron in two—and set your soul at liberty, and said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." God bless you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *GALATIANS 3.*

Paul, writing, to those changeable Galatians, who had so soon deserted the faith, says to them in this chapter.

Verse 1. *O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you*? Paul does not compliment them on being a very "thoughtful," "educated," "cultured" people—he does not care one atom about that matter but, because they had forsaken the simple Truth of the Gospel, he says, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" Those are hard words, Paul! Why did he not say, "Who has led you forward into more advanced views?" Not he! He calls it witchery, the work of the devil, and it is nothing better—and the wisdom of it is no better than the trickery of some old witch. If you take your eyes off Christ, it must be witchcraft that makes you do it! There is such glory, such beauty, such perfection, such wisdom, such divinity in Christ Crucified that if you turn from that sight to anything else, no matter how scientific and learned it may be, you are foolish, indeed, and somebody has "bewitched you."

2. *This only would I ask of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* They had gone off into legality. They were trying to be saved by ceremonies and by works of their own. "Well," asks Paul, "how did you receive the Spirit—the Spirit by which miracles were worked among you, the Spirit by which you spoke with unknown tongues—the Spirit which changed and renewed your hearts? If you did, indeed, receive Him, did you receive Him by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?" There was only one reply to the question—the Spirit came to them as the result of *faith*!

3. *Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?* If the very beginning of your religion was spiritual, a work of the Spirit received by faith, are you now going to be perfected by the flesh, by outward rites and ceremonies, or by efforts of your own?

4. *Have you suffered so many things in vain? If it is yet in vain.* You had to struggle and endure much contention within your own spirit to get upon the ground of faith at all—are you going to throw all that away? Is all the experience of your past life to go for nothing and are you now going to begin on a lower and baser platform?

5. *Therefore He 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?* He knew that they must reply that it was faith and not the works of the Law, that gave those miraculous powers!

6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* That is the old way, the way of faith! It is not here recorded that Abraham *did* anything, though he did much, but the one thing that was "accounted to him for righteousness" was this, that he "believed God."

7. *Know you, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* Not this nation or that, as Anglo-Israelites might say, but those that are of *faith*—these are the children of Abraham! Abraham is the father of the faithful, the Believers, and Believers are all the children of Abraham! Race has nothing to do with this matter—an end has been put to all that. God is not the God of the Jews, only, but also of the Gentiles, and here is a new race whose distinction is not that they were born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but by the *will of God*! This is the token by which they are known—they *believe God* and it is accounted to them for *righteousness*—even as it was accounted to Abraham!

8. *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.* That is the Gospel! And we are blessed by it, because we believe in Christ, and so become the children of believing Abraham.

9, 10. *So then, they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse.* All the people in the world who think themselves good. All the mere moralists. All those who, however amiable they may be, however excellent and religious they may be, are trusting to be saved by *good works*, are all under the curse, as surely as the drunkard, the liar, or the swearer is under the curse!

10. *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.* That is all that Moses can say to you, and all that the Old Testament can reveal to you. Apart from faith in Christ, all its rites and ceremonies, all its Laws and precepts, if you are resting in them, can only land you under the curse because you cannot continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them! You have not so continued thus far—you will not so continue—and nothing but an absolutely *perfect obedience to the Law* could save a man by the way of works! And as that obedience is not possible, we come under the curse if we come under the Law.

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.* Here Paul again quotes from the Old

Testament Scriptures—"The just shall live by faith." Even the just man lives by faith! Then how can you, who are not just, expect to live in any other way?

12. *And the Law is not of faith, but, The man that does them shall live in them.* The very spirit of Law is the spirit of works and, as life only comes by faith, it cannot come by the works of the Law, for they are not of faith! Now comes the Gospel, clear and bright, like the sun rising out of a thick fog!

13. *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.* Here is Substitution—what else can the words mean? Christ hung on a tree for us, bearing our curse, in our place!

14. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.* Christ was made a curse for us that the blessing might come upon us. He took our curse that we might take the blessing from His own dear hands and might possess it forever!

15. *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.* A covenant is a covenant—whatever happens, it cannot be altered—it stands, though it were only made by men.

16. *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.* Quoting from the Old Testament, we may believe in the absolute plenary Inspiration of that Sacred Book because the Apostle founds an argument upon the singular of a noun having been used rather than the plural!

17. *And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect.* Is not that splendid argument? The Covenant was made with Abraham that God would bless him and his seed. Well now, 430 years later, the Law was given on Sinai, but that could not affect a covenant made 430 years before! The argument goes to prove that the Covenant of Grace is not affected by any Law of rites and ceremonies, no, not even by the Moral Law, itself! The Covenant made with Abraham and his seed must stand—the seed signifies those who believe, therefore, the Covenant stands fast with Abraham and all other Believers.

18. *For if the inheritance is of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.* All through the Book of Genesis, it is promise, promise and promise! Isaac was an heir of the promise and Jacob was an heir of the promise. In fact, Isaac was born *by* promise and Ishmael, the elder brother, did not inherit the blessing because he was born after the flesh. They who believe in Christ are heirs according to the promise! Now, a promise takes us out of the region of Law.

19. *Why, then, serve the Law?* What is the use of it?

19, 20. *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. The Law had its uses, blessed uses. The Law should be used for its own purposes and then it is admirable—it is Divine. Take it out of its own proper use—make it a *master* instead of being a *servant*—and it is something like fire, which, in your grate, will comfort you, but if it masters you, it burns your house and destroys you!

21, 22. *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.* It shuts you all up as in a dungeon, that by the one and only door of *faith in Christ* you might come out into a glorious liberty!

23, 24. *But before faith came we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Therefore the Law was our schoolmaster*—This is an unfortunate translation! It should be, "The Law was our pedagogue." That was a slave who was employed by the father of a family, to take his boy to school and bring him home, again. He often was also permitted to whip the boy if he did not learn his lessons well. "The Law was our pedagogue"

24, 25. *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.* We have outgrown him! God has given us power, now, to go to Christ's school, ourselves, joyfully and cheerfully! I remember and I daresay you do, also, when that pedagogue whipped us very sorely! I am glad that I am no longer under his power.

26, 27. *For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* You set forth that Truth of God in your Baptism—you then confessed that you were dead to sin—and declared that you were risen again in Christ to newness of life. Whatever you had to do with the Law before, you were dead and buried to it and to everything but Christ!

28, 29. *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 are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* That settles the question! If you belong to Christ, you are the children of Abraham! Come, then, and, without the least hesitation, claim all the privileges that belong to Abraham's seed! If you have come under the promise, enjoy its blessing, and do not go back to trusting in rites and ceremonies—or in works of your own performing—but live a life of joyous faith in Jesus Christ your Lord!

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 SWEET AND THE SWEETENER
NO. 2403

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 10, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1887.

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet."
Psalm 104:34.

THOSE OF YOU who were present this morning know that, with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, I pleaded with men that they would come to Christ. [Sermon # 1951, Volume 33—*The Pleading of the Last Messenger*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] If ever in my life I felt that I had spent every particle of my strength, I felt it when I had finished that discourse. I could have wished to die and end my ministry, with the testimony that I bore this morning. I know not in what way I could have more completely poured out my whole being in earnest desire for the conversion of my fellow men. I thought that it would not be possible for me to handle another subject in anything like the same fashion, tonight—I did not feel that I could do so. I said to myself, therefore, "Instead of preaching, instead of having anything to do that will cost much effort and cause much mental strain, I will just be one among the people and enjoy myself as a member of the congregation.

I will have a subject upon which we can all calmly think—I mean, all of us who know the Lord"—and it seemed to me as if nothing could be more fitting than to think of Him who is the joy of our heart, to meditate upon Him who is the strength of our spirit, even our blessed Lord, of whom the text says, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." So, then, I am not going to preach at this time—I am just going to lead your meditations a little, myself meditating while you meditate, being a sort of a leader to pitch the tune in which, I trust, all who love the Lord will heartily join. May God the Holy Spirit help us all sweetly to meditate upon Him of whom the Psalmist here speaks!

This 104th Psalm is a very wonderful one. Humboldt wrote a book which he called, *Cosmos,* that is, the world, and this Psalm is a Cosmos—it is a world set on fire with praise! It is all creation, from the mountain's summit down to the brooks that sparkle through the valleys praising God! I have frequently read this Psalm through in the woods and on the mountainside and, when we have come home from an excursion in the Italian mountains, I have said to my companions, "Now we will read the 104th Psalm." It is the naturalist's Psalm! It is the Psalm of nature viewed by the eye of faith and he that learns to look aright on seas and mountains, on beasts and birds, on sun and moon and stars, sees God in all things and says with the Psalmist, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

But, Beloved, redemption is a choicer theme for meditation than creation is, for its wonders are far greater! I can understand that God should make the worlds, but that He should redeem men from eternal ruin, I cannot understand. The Creator fashioning all things by the Word of His power is nothing like so remarkable an object of meditation as that same Creator, veiled in human flesh, yielding His hands to the nails of the Cross and bowing His head beneath the stroke of death! If creation is marvelous, redemption is a more sublime miracle, a wonder in the very center of all wonders!

Nor is the theme of redemption less vast than that of creation. Truly, nature is a very wide theme, from the almost infinite greatness which is discovered through the telescope to the wonderful minuteness which is perceived through the microscope. Nature seems to have no boundaries, yet it is a mere fragment compared with redemption, where everything is infinite, where you have to deal with sin and love, life and death, eternity and Heaven and Hell, God and man—and the Son of God made flesh for man's sake! Now you are among the sublimities, indeed, meditating upon redemption—your theme is vast beyond conception!

And let me add that the theme of redemption is quite as fresh as that of nature. Nature, it is true, never grows stale—from the first day of the year till the last, it is always young! Did you ever see the ocean look twice the same? Did you ever gaze upon the face of nature without always perceiving some fresh beauty? And it is just the same with redemption. The Cross never grows old! The doctrine of Christ Crucified is a spring that wells up forever with a sparkling freshness! Not even the eternal ages shall exhaust it—when untold myriads of years have passed away, this old, old story of the Cross will still be new!

There is this much more to say about a meditation upon redemption, that it comes closely home to us. I like to think of the stars, but, after all, I can be happy if the stars are quenched. I delight to think of the rolling ocean, but still, I could rejoice if there were no more sea. But in *redemption* we have a vital and personal interest—we could not live as we now live, in the sight of God we could not truly live at all—if we had not been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. The seas and the starry worlds are not ours as blessedly as Christ is ours and none of them can bring medicine to the heart and joy to the spirit as does Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us. So I think I may say, however excellent the naturalist's meditations are, and the more of right meditation upon nature the better—and I wish that we were all learned after the order of true science, which deals with nature itself, and not with theories—yet, if you know little about these things in which some take so deep an interest, your meditations of God may be exceedingly sweet! If you stay within the boundaries of redemption through Jesus Christ, which are by no means narrow, you may say, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

So, first, I shall talk about *the sweet*—"My meditation of Him shall be sweet." Then I shall speak *of the sweet as a sweetener*, for it is not only sweet in *itself*, but it *imparts* sweetness—such sweetness as we need amid the many bitters of this mortal life.

I. First, then, let us talk about THE SWEET—"My meditation *of Him* shall be sweet." "Of Him"—that is, of the Well-Beloved of the Father, of

the Well-Beloved of the Church, of the Well-Beloved of my own soul—of Him who loved me, in whose blood I have washed my robes and made them white. It is meditation "of Him" that is sweet—not merely of doctrine about Him, but of Him, of Himself—"my meditation of Him." Not merely of His offices, and His work, and all that concerns Him, but of His own dear Self! There lies the sweetness and the closer we come to His blessed Person, the more truly have we approached the very center of bliss!

Then it is "*meditation* of Him" that makes the sweetness! Brothers and Sisters, it is very delightful to *hear* about our Lord. I am sure that I have often been charmed when I have heard what others have had to say about Him. My hearing of Him is very sweet, but it does not say that in our text. It is, "my *meditation* of Him." When I hear over and over, again, in the echoes of my heart, what I have heard with my ears. When, like the cattle, having cropped the luscious food, I lie down, as they do, to ruminate and chew the cud, "my meditation of Him shall be sweet." To think over, again, what I have already thought of. To turn over and over in my soul Truths of God with which I am happily familiar, which I have tasted and handled many times—just to taste and handle them, again—in doing so, "my meditation of Him shall be sweet." The more we know of Christ, the more we want to know of Him! And the more sweet Christ is to us, already, the more sweet He will be! We can never exhaust this gold mine—it gets richer, the deeper we dig into it. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." I will not ask for the glowing periods of the orator. I will not wish for the profundities of the theologian. I will just sit down, humble as my mind may be, and think of what I have heard and known, and especially of all I have *experienced* of my Lord. And "my meditation of Him shall be sweet."

But let me dwell a minute on that first word—"*My* meditation of Him shall be sweet," Not another man's meditation, which is afterwards related to me, but my *own* meditation of Him shall be sweet! Let me say, concerning the wine of communion with Christ, that it is never so sweet to a man as when he treads the grapes out himself—"*My* meditation of Him shall be sweet." You get a text and beat out its meaning, "working your passage," as we say, into the very soul of it. Then you will understand it and you will also enjoy it! Make meditation of Christ to be your own personal act and deed! Grasp Him for yourself and hold Him by the feet! Put your own finger into the prints of the nails and, out of your own heart's experience cry, "*My* Lord and *my* God!" Then you shall not need that I tell you how sweet such a meditation is, for you will be able to say for yourself, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

It does not matter, my dear Friend, who you are, if you do but belong to Christ, your meditation of Him shall be sweet! You are a very poor and illiterate person, perhaps, but, if you know Him, it shall be sweet to you to meditate upon Him. Or, it may be you are a man of large reading and of wide knowledge. But I am quite sure that there is not in all the range of your reading, *anything* for sweetness comparable to Him! The science of Christ Crucified leads the van of all the sciences! This is the most excellent of all knowledge—compared with which every other knowledge is but ignorance dressed in its best! "My meditation of Him shall be

sweet"—even mine as I stand here in the midst of you—and yours as you sit in those pews. And as you come presently to this Table of Communion, I hope each one who meditates on Christ will be able to say, "my meditation of Him shall be sweet."

Now let us meditate on Him for a few minutes and, first, *meditate upon His Person*. This Blessed One, who is verily among us tonight, is God and Man. Meditate upon His Manhood. He is of a Nature like your own. Sin, alone, excepted, He is a Man as you are. Think of it and rejoice that He has so intense a sympathy with you and that you can have so intense a sympathy with Him! He is your Brother, though He is also the Prince of the kings of the earth! He is your Husband, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, though He is also "over all, God blessed forever." Do not our hearts begin at once to warm towards the Man, Christ Jesus—in all our afflictions, afflicted, in all our griefs a partaker—and shall not our meditation of Him be sweet?

But then He is also God, and, as God, He has all dominion and authority in Heaven and on earth. Think, then, how near He has brought us to the Godhead! There is now no division between a believing man and God—the Christ has bridged the chasm between the Creator and the creature! One might have thought that this gulf could never have been bridged. Between an angry God and a sinner, reconciliation may be made, but between a Creator and His creature, what link of union can there be? There could have been none if Christ had not become Incarnate! If God had not taken Manhood into union with Himself, we could never have been brought so near to God as we now are. Angels, you may stand back! You can never come so near the Throne of God as man has come, for he was made a little lower than the angels, but now, in the Person of Christ, He is set in the place of dominion and honor, and made to be master over all the works of God's hands! My meditation upon the Divine Person of my blessed Master shall be sweet, shall it not? I do but indicate a long vista of delight, as it were. I open the gate, and say, "Go in there, Friend. You shall find good food for meditation that way."

Now let us *meditate upon our Lord's life*, for this meditation shall also be sweet. Suppose I take the four Gospels and read the story of my blessed Master's existence here among men? Well, it needs meditating on, for that life is much more than the Evangelists could write. The life of Christ has a wonderful depth in it! The other day I was reading aloud the first chapter of Luke's Gospel and trying to expound it. And when I came to the close of my meditation, I said to myself, "If I were shut up to that one chapter for a whole lifetime, I could never expound all its depths." That simple life of Christ, from Nazareth to Golgotha, is a life of fathomless deeps! And the more you shall meditate upon it, the more sweetness shall you find in it. Oh, to think of His fellowship with me if I am poor, for He hungered! His fellowship with me if I am weary, for He, "being weary, sat thus on the well"! His fellowship with me if I have to stand foot to foot with the old enemy, to contend, even, for my life! His fellowship with me if I lie in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, and have to cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

Read by the eye of faith, the whole story of the life of Christ is full of sweetness to the meditative mind, for remember that as He contended,

He became a conqueror! And in this, too, we shall be like He, for we shall overcome through His blood! Faith in Him will give us the victory—we shall tread Satan under our feet before the battle is finished, even as He has done! My meditation of His woes, coupled with my meditation of His ultimate joys shall be exceedingly sweet as a prophecy that, if I stoop, I, too, shall conquer—and though I am cast down, yet shall my casting down be but the means of lifting me up!

Now, here is another road for your thoughts to travel. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet," especially when *I meditate on His death.* The death of our Lord and Master should be the habitual theme of the meditation of God's people. I am afraid, in these days, we do not think enough of the Cross and passion of our Divine Redeemer. I read, in the "modern thought" papers and reviews, sneers about our "sensuous" hymns when we sing about our Lord upon the Cross—they would have us not talk about His blood! Those expressions are "out of date." It is "mediaeval," (I think that is the word), to set forth a dying Christ, they say! Now, mark you, the strength of the Church of Rome over many minds has, for centuries, lain in the fact that she keeps prominent the facts of our Lord's passion and death. Perverted as that truth about His Cross often is, yet it has salvation in it—and I doubt not that many find their way to eternal life, even in that apostate Church, by the fact that Christ Crucified is made to be a great reality!

If it ever comes to pass among us who are called Protestants, and those who are called Protestant Dissenters, that the great fact of the death of Christ is to be regarded as a kind of myth, out of which certain obscure doctrines may be fetched, but which is not, itself, to be spoken of, we shall have cut the Achilles tendon of our strength and our power to bless the sons of men will have departed! Oh, give me the story of the Cross, the veritable story! Yes, let my eyes behold the wounds of Jesus as I stand and bow before the Crucified! His death was a literal fact—no phantom dream—and so would we hold it! And we would meditate upon it as the center of all our hopes. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet," is especially true of Christ on Calvary's Cross. Here I see Atonement completed, satisfaction rendered, justice honored, Grace expounded, love struggling, bleeding, contending, conquering! In the actual death of Christ upon the Cross I see the safety of His elect whom He has purchased with His precious blood! I see here the ending of the reign of evil, the bruising of the old serpent's head. I see the great rock on which the kingdom of God is established upon a sure foundation sealed with the blood of Christ. Oh, go and live on Calvary, you saints! No better air is to be found beneath the cope of Heaven and, as you linger there, your meditation on your Lord shall be sweet!

But what am I saying? For wherever I contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ, "my meditation of Him shall be sweet." Follow Him in *His Resurrection.* Behold Him *in His present Glory*—meditate much upon *His intercession at the right hand of God.* How secure are we because He always lives to intercede for us! What prophecies of good things to come are hidden away in the Person of our great High Priest before the Throne of God.

Think, too, *of the glory yet to be revealed.* "Behold, He comes." Every hour is bringing Him nearer! We shall see Him in that Day and though

we may fall asleep before He comes, yet at His coming He shall raise our bodies from the dust and, *in our flesh* we shall see God! Let us meditate much upon the glories of Christ's Second Advent, the transcendent splendors of our Divine Conqueror, the background of His sufferings only making His triumphs to shine the more brightly! Meditate upon these things—give your minds wholly to them—then shall you prove the sweetness which dwells in them all.

If you, who are children of God, do not feel that you could traverse any of these paths, I want you to seek to get sweetness out of this thought, "HE loves me." Say to yourself, Believer, "If there is never another one in Heaven or on earth that loves me, yet Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me! It is well-nigh inconceivable, yet is it true."

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, THE SWEET AS A SWEETENER—"My meditation of Him shall be sweet,"

That is to say, first, it *shall sweeten all my other sweetnesses*. I commend to you who are happy, to you who are full of joy, this blessed method of securing to yourselves a continuance of that happiness and in such a manner as to prevent its spoiling. If you have honey and your hands are full of it, be cautious how you eat it, for you may eat honey till you are sick of it! But if you have a great store of honey, put something sweeter than honey with it, and then it will not harm you. I mean, if God has given you joy in your youth, if you are prospered in business, if your house is full of happiness, if your children sing about you knee, if you have health and wealth, and your spirit dances with joy—all this, by itself, may curdle and spoil. Add to it a sweet meditation of your Lord and all will be well, for it is safe to enjoy temporal things when we enjoy eternal things more! If you will put Christ upon the throne to rule over these good things of yours, then all shall be well. But if you dethrone Him to set these things up—then they become idols—and "the idols He shall utterly abolish." If you are truly His, you shall have great sorrow in the falling of your Dagons, but it shall surely come to pass. O cheerful, happy, joyous people, I wish there were more of you! I am not condemning your joy—I would partake in it—but let the uppermost joy you have always be "Jesus Christ, Himself." If the occasion of joy is your marriage, ask Him to the wedding, for He will turn the water into wine! If it is your prosperity, ask Him to the harvest festival and He will bless your storehouse and your barn, and make your mercies to be real blessings to you!

But, dear Friends, I need not say much about this point, because, at least to some of us, our very sweet days are not very long or very many. The comfort is that *this sweetness can sweeten all our bitters*. There was never yet a bitter in the cup of life but what a meditation upon Christ would overcome that bitterness and turn it into sweetness! I will suppose that you are, at this time, undergoing personal trials of a temporal kind. There are a great many cures for the cares of this life which philosophy would suggest, but I suggest none of them to you—I prescribe meditation upon Christ! I have already given your many hints how the sorrows, the struggles and the conquests of the life of Christ may help to sweeten all your conflicts and your struggles. Half an hour's communion with the Lord Jesus will take away the keenness of all your anxieties. Enter into your chamber, shut the door and begin to speak with the Man of Sor-

rows, and your own sorrows will soon be relieved. If you are poor, get to Him who had not where to lay His head and you will even seem to be rich as you come back to your place in the world! Have you been despised and rejected? Do but look on Him on whom men spat, whom they cast out, saying that it was not fit that He should live—and you will feel as if you never had true honor except when you were, for Christ's sake, despised and dishonored! You will almost feel as if it was too great an honor for you to have been contemned for His dear sake, who bore the shame and the spitting and the cruel Cross for your sake. Yes, the best sweetener of all temporal troubles is a meditation upon Christ Jesus our Lord!

So is it with all the troubles that come of your Christian work and service. I do not know how it is with any of my fellow workers, here, but I can say this, my work has about it a joy that angels might envy, but, at the same time, it has also a sorrow which I would not wish any to know if it stood by itself. To preach Christ, oh, what bliss it is! To tell of my Master's sweet love and of His power to save the guilty, I would be content to stay out of Heaven for seven ages if I might always be permitted to do nothing else but preach Christ to perishing sinners! But there is the heartbreak which comes with it, often, in preparing to preach, lest haply one should not take the right subject, or should not have one's heart in a right condition for the handling of it.

Add to that the anxieties that creep over one occupying such a position as mine. Standing where I stand tonight and remembering many sorrowful histories, many disappointed hopes concerning the condition of many now before me, I go home, sometimes, wishing that I could creep into my bed and never come out of it again because of my terrible anguish over some of you who will, I fear, be eternally lost! As surely as you are here, you will be lost unless you turn to Christ! Nothing seems as if it could save you—entreaties, invitations, warnings, prayers—all are in vain! You are still without God and without Christ—and if you remain so, you will be lost—and we cannot bear the thought of it! We cannot endure to think that we should preach, and warn, and entreat, and invite and yet that it should all end in nothing except that we should look from the right hand of the Great Judge and spy you out among those to whom He will say, "Depart from Me, you cursed!"

Truly, there is an awful heartbreak that comes to us when we think of these things! And when we see some, who did run well, turning aside. Some who held the Truth of God, decrying and denying that Truth. Some who once preached it, beginning to preach up the fancies of the age instead of the Gospel of all the ages, then our heart is, indeed, heavy! But what then? "My meditation of Him shall be sweet!" He is still the same God over all, blessed forevermore. He is still exalted a Prince and a Savior. Jesus will surely save His own and He will overthrow all His adversaries, for, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth." After all is said and done, there is no dishonor possible to Him! It is true that "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," but finish the quotation, "Why God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name" (or, "in the name") "of Jesus every knee should

bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." So, my meditation of Him, even amid the anxieties of Christian service, shall be exceedingly sweet!

Yes, Beloved, and it is just the same when you come to the anxieties concerning your own spiritual condition. I suppose that the very good, "perfect" people we sometimes meet with, or hear of, never get into the state I sometimes get into, but I believe that many of you feel, at times, cast down and troubled about your own spiritual state. Whether men laugh at it or not, I know that many a child of God beside John Newton has had to say—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

I venture to say that as this was the question which the Lord, Himself, put to Peter, it is, therefore, not a wrong question for us to ask ourselves. When darkness veils the skies and the spirit sinks, and a sense of sin is more prevalent than the realization of Divine Grace, then it is bitterness, indeed! And at such a time, the very best sweetener of the waters of Marah is to think of Christ—"My meditation of Him shall be sweet." A sinner's Savior— oh, how sweet He is to such a sinner as I! A Savior for those that have no strength—what a precious Savior He is to a weak one like myself! A Savior who, though we believe not as we ought, still abides faithful—what a dear Savior He is to a half-believing one who has to cry, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief!"

Let me give you a little piece of advice—do not think of yourself, but think of your Lord! Or, if you must think of yourself, for every time you give an eye to self, give twice that time to Christ! Then shall your meditation of Him be sweet.

Thus, dear Friends, as long as we live, and when we come to die, our meditation of Him shall be sweet! I would not have you fear the bitterness of death, any of you, if you are trusting in Jesus. God has a wonderful power of strengthening our souls when our bodies grow very weak and feeble. I am quite sure that some of my dear Friends were never before in such a condition in all their lives as I have seen them in when they have evidently been marked for death. The messenger has come, and, as John Bunyan puts it, has brought some timely "token" to warn the spirit that, in a very short time, it is to appear among the shining ones at the right hand of God. I have seen, just then, the spirit of the timid grow strangely brave and the spirit of the questioning grow singularly assured! The Lord has manifested Himself in an unusually gracious way to the poor fluttering heart. Just as the dove was about to take its last long flight, it seemed to have its eyes strengthened to see the place to which it must fly—and all timidity was gone forever. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

When I lie dying, when heart and flesh are failing me, when I shall have little else to think of but my Lord and the eternal state, then shall thoughts of Him pull up the floodgates of the river of bliss and let the very joy of Heaven into my heart! And, by His Grace, I shall be eager to

be up and away! I shall not dread the pains, and groans, and dying strife of which some talk so much—but the sweetness of "my meditation of Him" shall make me forget even the bitterness of death, itself!

I have done when I have just given you one more thought. Our text might be read thus, "My meditation shall be sweet *to* Him." We are going to uncover the Table of Communion directly. You will have nothing to think of but the body and the blood of Him by whose death you live. That meditation will, I trust, be very sweet to you, but this fact ought to help to make it so—that it will be "sweet to Him." Jesus loves you to love Him—and He loves you to think of Him! I know what you have said, sometimes. I remember a Christian woman saying to me, "I have often wished that I could preach, Sir. I have often wished that I had but been a man that I might constantly preach the Gospel." I do not wonder, I should marvel, indeed, if a good many Christian people did not say, "I wish that I could be a missionary," or, "I wish that I could be a poetess, like Miss Havergal, and sweetly sing of Christ." Perhaps you cannot do any of those things, but you *can* meditate on Christ, can you not? And your meditation on Him shall be sweet to Him! He will delight in your delighting in Him!

"Oh, but I am a nobody," says one. "I am nothing." I tell even you that your meditation of Christ, though it seems not to go very deep, though you cannot, perhaps, keep your thoughts together, well—yet that heart meditation of yours, which longs to meditate on your Lord and craves to know more of Him—is very sweet to Him. Why, you fathers and mothers, you know how it is with those little ones of yours—and especially that first little one that just begins to talk! It has said nothing but nonsense at present, yet you respect the little words, do you not? It is a wonderful speech that little boy of yours made—but why do you think so much of your child's little thoughts and expressions? Is it not because he is your child that you value his words so much?

Well now, you belong to Christ and because you belong to Him, He accepts your meditations because He accepts *you*! And He takes a delight even in those poor broken perplexed thoughts of yours! He knows that if you could sing like the seraphim, you would do so. If you could serve Him as the angels do, you would. Well, if you cannot do that, you can at least meditate on Christ—and your meditation of Him shall be sweet to Him. Oh, then, give Him much of it, and God bless you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 104.

I trust that we have already felt something of holy enjoyment while our hearts and voices have been praising the Lord our God. Perhaps this Psalm may help to keep us in a praising state of mind. First of all, David sang of the majesty of God in His works. Then it seems as if the spirit of praise within him became like a strong-winged angel and, mounting into the sky, he began to soar aloft over the varied landscapes of the world until the sun went down. And even then, he continued moving along through the darkness till the sun arose again and found him still prais-

ing his God! We will note, as we read the Psalm, this strange, mysterious flight of the spirit of praise.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my Soul.* There is the keynote. Strike it, my Brothers and Sisters, each one of you!

1-3. *O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honor and majesty. Who covers Yourself with light as with a garment: who stretches out the heavens like a curtain: who lays the beams of His chambers in the waters.* Or, as we may read it from the Hebrew, "who makes His halls in the waters," those mysterious waters above the firmament are here pictured as being the cool, retired dwelling place of the majestic Deity.

3. *Who makes the clouds His chariot: who walks upon the wings of the wind.* A masterly picture, as if the Lord stood erect upon the two wings of the wind and, as if the wind, like a mighty spirit, went flying round the world with the great Jehovah standing upon its wings, and so riding along!

4, 5. *Who makes His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire: who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever.* Now comes a very graphic description of Noah's flood.

6. *You covered it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.* What a splendid act of Divine Energy, when the waters which, before, like tamed lions, slept in their dens, came hungry and fierce and swallowed up the whole earth!

7, 8. *At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which You founded for them.* At the sound of God's voice, those mighty deeps went back in a great hurricane. Anyone who has seen water when it is traveling at a great rate, lashed with tempests, will have seen it tossed as into mountains and then having huge holes like vast valleys in it, so, the waters rose up like mountains and fell down like valleys till they found the channels of the deep which God had found for them.

9. *You have set a boundary that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.* Jehovah puts the bit of sand into the mouth of the sea and it comes no farther than its appointed boundaries. Now you must suppose the Psalmist is leaving the crowded streets and the dingy, dusty, smoky haunts of men and flying, on the wings of his gratitude and praise, away into the quiet of the fertile country.

10-12. *He sends the springs into the valleys which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the Heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.* I know of no place that seems to bring out one's joy and praise better than when standing by the side of some rippling brook that tumbles down the fissure among the rocks and, seeing the animals come to drink, and hearing the birds blithely sing among the branches, or hang over and dip into the very stream! Even the reading of this Psalm may be like a cool and refreshing breeze to you at this time—and your soul may, in imagination, fly away with David, as you also praise and bless your God!

13. *He waters the hills from His chambers.* From those watery halls above the firmament He pours down the showers.

13-15. *The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that makes glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart.* The spirit of praise is flying over the fields plowed and tilled by man, over the fruitful vineyards red with clusters of grapes and over the olive gardens and other places where man's handiwork has made the earth fertile. Now the Psalmist mounts still higher and gets into the forests.

16, 17. *The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.* Flying along over the tops of the trees, he looks down among them and he notices the beasts as well as the birds

18. *The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.* So that there is not any part of the earth which is not full of God's goodness! Even the rocks, which yield nothing to the plow, furnish a refuge for the conies, and the high hills are a home for the wild goats, while the fertile earth beneath makes man's heart glad. As the spirit of praise flies over the tops of the mountains, the sun goes down. The Psalmist witnesses that grand sight, an Eastern sunset.

19, 20. *He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knows his going down. You make darkness, and it is night.* Will he now cease from his song? No, for God does not cease to work!

20, 21. *Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.* So that even night has its mysterious music and the roaring of the young lions is a tribute to the Providence of the good God who cares even for the beasts that perish!

22. *The sun arises, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.* You see, the Psalmist does not cease his praise, but finds a theme for music even in the rest of the beasts.

23, 24. *Man goes forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have you made them all: the earth is full of Your riches.* The Psalmist has made a long journey, flying along just where he could see everything upon the face of the earth, but he thinks to himself that he has not seen the half of God's works, yet, for yonder is the Mediterranean, glistening in the morning sunbeams, so he takes another flight.

25, 26. *So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships.* That is, above the water—while in it—

26. *There is that leviathan, whom You have made to play therein.* Some mighty fish leaps out of the sea. The Psalmist's eye catches a glimpse of it and he puts even that monster into his hymn of praise!

27. *These wait all upon You, that You may give them their meat in due season.* My Brothers and Sisters, what an idea we have, here, of God thus supplying all the creatures of the earth and the sea! They are all waiting upon Him—they can go to no other storehouse but His—no other

granary can supply their needs! Surely, we need not be afraid that He will fail *us*. It He feeds leviathan, with his great needs, and the many birds with their little needs, He will not forget His children! He will never withhold any real good from them that walk uprightly.

28. *What You give them they gather: You open Your hand, they are filled with good.* That is all He has to do, you see, just open His hand. If that hand were once fast closed, they would all die, but, in order to supply the needs of all the creatures He has made, He has only to open His hand!

29. *You hide Your face.* As if He did but put His hand before the brightness of His Countenance—

29, 30. *They are troubled: You take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created: and You renew the face of the earth.* When God takes away the genial light of the summer's sun, what multitudes of creatures die! And then, when the soft breath of spring blows upon the earth, how soon the multitudes of insects come teeming forth! Christian, here is comfort for you! Has God withheld His Spirit from you for a little while, and have many of your joys and comforts fallen dead? He has only to speak and He can, in a moment, renew all your comforts!

31-35. *The glory of the LORD shall endure forever: the LORD shall rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth and it trembles: He touches the hills and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.* It seems as if the spirit of praise had bred in the Psalmist a spirit of indignation against sin. He could no longer have any patience with those who would not adore so great and so good a God and, therefore, he utters this imprecation upon their heads which is rather a prophecy of what will be their doom—"Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more."

35. *Bless you the LORD, O my Soul. Praise you the LORD.* Thus the Psalmist, like a good musician, ends with the keynote of his song of praise—

"Bless the Lord, O my Soul."

May each of us say the same!

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 PEOPLE PREPARED FOR THE LORD"
NO. 2404

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 17, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 13, 1887.

"To make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
Luke 1:17.

JOHN was the herald of Christ—he was to prepare the way for the coming King—but from this text it appears that he was to do more than that. He was not only to make the road ready for the Lord, but he was also "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." That was a great work, a task in which he would require strength and wisdom greater than his own. He would need that the Spirit of God, who was to be given without measure to the coming One, should also be, in a measure, within himself, if he should really "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

This is not at all a usual expression. At first sight, it hardly looks to us like a Gospel expression. We sang just now—

"Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come."

We sang over and over again those words, "Just as I am," "Just as I am," and we are prone to protest against the idea of being *prepared* for Christ. We constantly preach that no preparation is needed, but that men are to come to Jesus just as they are. Yet here is John the Baptist set apart, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The fact is, dear Friends, that to get men to come to Jesus just as they are is not an easy thing. To get them to give up the idea of preparing, to get them prepared to come without preparing, to get them ready to come just as they are—this is the hardest part of our work—this is our greatest difficulty. If we came and preached to men the necessity of preparation through so many weeks of fasting during a long Lent, or through so many days of scourging and penitence, they would attend to us at once, for they would be willing enough to make any preparation of that kind! But, when we say to them, "Come just as you are, with nothing in your hands to buy the mercy of God, with nothing wherewith to demand or to deserve it," men want a great deal of preparing before they will come to that point! Only the Grace of God, working mightily through the Word, by the Spirit, will prepare men to come to Christ—prepared by being unprepared so far as any fitness of their own is concerned. The only fit state in which they can come is that of sinking themselves, abandoning all idea of helping Christ, coming in all their natural impotence and guilt and taking Christ to be their All in All.

Beloved Friends, this is the true preparedness of heart for coming to Christ—the preparedness of coming to Him just as you are! And it was John's business, thus, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." That is also my business at this time. May the good Spirit, who dwelt in John the Baptist, work through us, also, that some here may be made ready for Christ—"a people prepared for the Lord"! Let us see how John carried out his commission. We shall then be better able to understand the text.

I. First, John made ready "a people prepared for the Lord" BY AWAKENING THEIR ATTENTION.

The people were asleep—they had fallen into a condition of religious lethargy, when suddenly there stood in their midst a man clothed in camel's hair and with a leather girdle about his loins—a Prophet, manifestly, by the boldness and truthfulness of his utterances. He spoke in such a way that the people in general heard of his speaking and they advertised him by saying, the one to the other, "That is a strange man who has begun to preach by the River Jordan and whose meat is locusts and wild honey."

The whole style of the man set the people wondering and talking. And when they came to listen to him, he did not flatter them! He did not utter mere commonplace truths to them, but with burning earnestness he drove straight at their hearts and spoke like Elijah, the great Prophet of fire, had done in the ages gone by. *So he set them thinking*. That is a great preparation for coming to Christ just as you are, to be set a-thinking! We have always hope of men when they once begin to think about religion and the things of God. See how the bulk of them hurry on with their eyes tightly shut, rushing fast and yet faster, still, down to destruction! You cannot make them stop and think. There are thousands of men who would almost sooner be whipped than be made to think. The last thing to which they will ever come, of themselves, is thoughtfulness!

Let me appeal to some here who are still unconverted. Did you ever give the affairs of your soul the benefit of an hour's serious consideration? You have your regular time for stocktaking, those of you who are in business—do you ever take stock of your *spiritual* estate? I know that you are not such fools as to neglect your ledgers, you cast up your accounts to see where you are, financially, but do you cast up the account between God and your own soul, and look the matter fairly and squarely in the face? Oh, if we could but bring you to do this, we would feel that you were being prepared for coming to Christ just as you are, for no man will come to Christ while he is utterly careless and thoughtless! Faith is a matter of thought—it requires a mind awakened from slumber, a mind that has taken wing—and John the Baptist did good service for his Master when he startled men into that condition and so made them consider their ways.

He did more than that, for, having first made them think, *he preached to them a Savior*. He told them that One was coming with power to baptize them after a higher sort than his baptism. He cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and this message

infused into the people a measure of hope. The poor people said, "What shall we do?" for they had a hope that there was something to be gained. Even the tax-gatherers, despised as they were, began to look up and think that there might be something, even, for them, so they said to John, "Master, what shall we do?" And the rough Roman soldiers thought, "There may be something for us," so they, also, asked," And what shall *we* do?" John inspired the multitudes with hope.

It is a very blessed state of mind for a man to get in when he begins to hope that he may be saved. Then he will be prepared to come to Jesus, just as he is, when he feels that he is not shut up to despair. "Oh," says the poor man, "I need not, after all, be lost! I need not abide forever under the wrath of God! There is an open door set before me, there is a way of mercy, even for me!" I wish it were possible that everybody whom I am now addressing had that feeling—it would be part of the making ready of "a people prepared for the Lord" when thought had blossomed into hope.

But John led his hearers on further than that, for *they began to expect something as well as to hope for it*. They expected that the Christ would speedily come and they expected some great blessings through the coming of the Messiah. And oh, when men, after hearing the Gospel, have great expectations concerning God and His salvation, surely their expectations will not be long disappointed! I remember a man coming, one day, to see me. He said that he wished to take a sitting in the Tabernacle. He had been hearing me for some time and he wanted to take a seat—but he desired to be very honest with me and not to take a seat except upon a right understanding. I asked, "What is the difficulty, my Friend?" "Well," he replied, "the person who sat next to me on Sunday told me that if I became a regular hearer here, you would expect me to be converted." "Well," I answered, "that is true, I shall expect it." "But," he said, "you do not mean that you will *require* it of me." "Oh, dear no!" I replied, "nothing of the sort. I do not expect you to convert *yourself*, but I hope and trust that you will be converted—that is what I mean. I shall expect that God, in His Grace, will meet with you and save you."

"Oh," he said, "I hope that, too! Only I mean that I could not guarantee it." "Ah," I said, "I see that you have taken the word, 'expect,' in the wrong sense, but I think, dear Friend, that if you come *expecting* to be converted, and I preach expecting that *you will be converted*, it is highly probable that it will soon take place." "Oh," he exclaimed, "God grant it!" The good Brother has long since gone to Heaven. A very few weeks after our conversation, he came and told me that the expectation in which we had united had been fulfilled and he trusted that he had found the Savior. When people come really *expecting* a blessing, they will be sure to get it! I believe that some folk go to hear ministers with the idea that there will be something to find fault with and, of course, they find that it is so. And when people come to hear another preacher, with the hope and expectation that God will bless them, of course God *does* bless them. Their expectation is Divinely fulfilled! I always have a bright hope that a man will lay hold on Christ when he begins to expect to be saved, for he feels, then, that the time has come for him to find eternal life. John made

ready "a people prepared for the Lord" because, first, he led them to *thought*. Next, he led them to *hope*, and then he led them to *expectation*—and this is a high measure of preparation!

John did more than this, for he cried, "Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," that is to say, *he put a pressure of urgency upon the people*. A Brother, who is an eminent preacher, but who uses rather long words, was explaining to me the benefit of the preaching of Mr. Fullerton and Mr. Smith in his place of worship. He said, "I do not know exactly why these Brothers were the means of the conversion of many in my place whom I had never reached, but I perceived that they had the power to precipitate decision." It sounded rather strange, but when I thought it over a little while, I rather liked the expression, "the power to precipitate decision." That is the power that leads men to make up their minds and say, "Yes," or, "No"—to feel that the decision has to be made at once and that the putting of it off is impossible because it would be a kind of insanity! Now that is the meaning of what John said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! Repent you! He is coming who wields the axe of Divine Justice—bear fruit, or else be cut down! He is coming who uses the great winnowing fan—be the true wheat, or else be blown away." He put the Truth of God so pointedly and so earnestly, that he did, by that means, make ready "a people prepared for the Lord."

II. Now, secondly, John made the people ready for CHRIST BY AWAKENING THEIR CONSCIENCES.

His very first utterance, as I have reminded you, was, "Repent you, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." "Repent! Repent! Repent!" was John's continual cry. This awakened the consciences of his hearers concerning *their sin*. Preaching repentance meant, "You have sinned! Change your mind in reference to that sin you have sinned—quit the sin, mourn over it, ask forgiveness for it. Repent!" Whenever a man brings to the minds of others their sins—when he does it so that they begin to feel that they *have* sinned—then they are being prepared for the Lord, for no man will come to the Savior unless he knows that he *needs a Savior.* And no man will feel that he needs a Savior until he feels that he is a sinner. Hence it is a real preparation of men for Christ to convince them of sin.

This John did. He brought their sin before them and then *he showed them their need of cleansing*, for he stood by the River Jordan, not with a scallop shell, as some depict him, but he stood by the flowing stream ready to immerse all those who repented! This was practically saying to them, "You need to be washed, you need to be cleansed, and I show you this Truth of God as I baptize you with water unto repentance. Be this a token to you that there is no entering Heaven in your filthiness, but you must first be washed! As your bodies are washed with pure water, so must your souls be washed and made clean before you can enter Heaven." This was John's plain teaching by his action as well as by his words.

Then he went very straight to his point of awakening their consciences by telling them *of their need of a change of life*. He said that it was no use for them to pretend to grieve over the past and then continue to sin in

the same fashion. "Bring forth fruits," he said, "meet for repentance," or, "answerable to amendment of life," as the margin has it. And he took pains to point out what the fruits must be. If they were men of greed, they must become generous and give to their needy neighbors. If they had been unrighteous and exacting, they must become honest. If they had been domineering and brutal, and murmuring, they must become contented and quiet, and gentle.

He not only preached to the multitudes about repentance of sin in general, *but he pointed out the precise sin of each class of persons* that came to him and urged them to perform the special duties which they had neglected. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I believe, as I have often said, that there is no sewing with silk thread, alone—you must have a *needle* as well! You need a sharp needle to, first, draw the thread through the material. And so you must preach the Law. You must denounce sin and you must individualize and condemn special sins. And you must be personal and pointed, or else men will not feel in their *consciences* what you say to them. Conscience is very apt to get seared as with a hot iron—to lose sensitiveness—so as to be no use at all as a conscience. Some say that conscience is a spark of deity, a divine monitor—it is nothing of the sort! In many a man it is almost extinct, for it does not act at all! The preacher who would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" must come out with his axe and lay it to the root of the trees! He must be definite and distinct in indicating this sin and that sin, and crying to all men, "Repent of these sins! Give them up! Get clear from them! Be washed from them or else, as God lives, when the Christ, Himself, comes, it will *not* be to *save* you, but to blow you away with His winnowing fan as the chaff is blown into the fire!"

This is "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"—by their being convinced of sin and led to repentance. That, I think, is a second meaning clearly illustrated in the ministry of John the Baptist.

III. But thirdly, John had "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" BY POINTING OUT THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.

He showed that *it did not depend upon external privileges*. As soon as John began to preach, the men of Jewish race, proud of their pedigree, pressed near, and John, with all the courage that a servant of the Lord could have, said, "Begin not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." You see the drift of his preaching, do you not? He says, practically, "Men and women, there is no virtue in your boasted privileges. There is no merit in your religious descent. As for supposing yourselves to be the peculiar people of God, you are not to be saved that way. Say not, 'We have Abraham as our father.'" Oh, how many hug that idea, "My father was a Christian." Others say, "Well, I live in a Christian country." They suppose that there is something in the very race from which they have sprung! Away with all such notions, for whatever external privileges you may have had, they are not sufficient to secure salvation for you!

Then came the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were the religious people of the time, the great observers of all outward propriety, but John taught them that *true religion is not the same as official pretension.* He called them a "generation of vipers." This was very disrespectful and very shocking, indeed, on his part! All the newspapers of the period, if there had been any, would have cried him down for his lack of charity, but he wanted those who came to him to understand that true religion was not the same as professing to be religious! It was not making broad the borders of their garments. It was not wearing a text of Scripture as a phylactery between their eyes. It was not making long prayers at the corners of the streets that would save them—there must be a thorough change of heart! So John spoke right straight out and this, I believe, is a great way of preparing men for coming to Christ, when you tell them, "It is not your early training, it is not your going to Church or Chapel, it is not your infant sprinkling and your confirmation! It is not even your *adult* Baptism, nor your saying prayers and reading the Bible that will save you—'you must be born again.' There must be an inward spiritual change worked by the Holy Spirit! You must believe in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, and you must so believe in Him as to be made new creatures in Him or else you cannot be saved." Now, when men realize that all this is true, it startles them out of their false refuges and makes them ready to flee to the only true Refuge, so that it is really the way of making ready "a people prepared for the Lord."

While John set forth this matter negatively, putting down all the wrong hopes of his hearers, he was exceedingly plain in telling them that the way of salvation would involve them in *the necessity of being right before God.* "There," he said, "the proof of a tree's life is its fruit and the evidence of your new life will be your good works. 'Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees and, therefore, every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Unless our religion makes us holy, it has not done anything for us that is really worth doing! Unless we hate sin and love righteousness, our religion is a sham and a lie! John stated that Truth of God very plainly—and that is the way to drive men to Christ.

He also told them that the trial of a life would be by its weight as well as by its fruit. "Look," he said, "at the heap that lies on the threshing floor. He that has the fan in his hand begins to winnow it. That which is light and chaffy is blown away. That which has wheat in it remains on the floor. So," he said, "there must be weight about your religion—stability, reality, sincerity. There must be heart-work in it. It must be no pretense. It must be true from beginning to end or else it shall be no more use to you than a heap of chaff would avail the farmer when it is blown into the fire."

Then John taught his hearers that Christ, Himself, would be the great Trier of human hearts—not ministers or fellow professors, but Christ, Himself. When men feel this to be true, then they begin to say to themselves, "There is more required than we, at present, possess. There is more demanded than we can ever manufacture of ourselves. Let us go to

Him that has it and ask Him for it. Let us go to Christ, who has Grace to bestow upon the poor and needy." This, then, is the way to make ready "a people prepared for the Lord," by pointing out to them the nature of true religion. That is what I have tried to do, dear Hearer. When you know that you cannot save yourself, you sing—

"Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Your Law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone."

And then you are ready to finish the verse by singing—

"You must save, and You, alone."

IV. Now. I shall close my discourse by noticing a fourth way in which John made ready "a people prepared for the Lord." He did it BY DECLARING THE GRACE AND POWER OF JESUS CHRIST.

My Brothers and Sisters, if I were to preach to you merely to awaken your attention, to awaken your consciences to a sense of sin, or simply to show you the nature of true religion, yet you would not be prepared for Christ unless you also knew something about Him, something about His suitableness and His power to save you. So, *John preached Jesus Christ as a mighty and glorious Savior on whom the Spirit rested.* He said, when he baptized our Lord, as Jesus came up out of the water, "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." John boldly preached and told the people that the Spirit of God rested upon Jesus Christ, yes, abode upon Him!

Now, this would lead them to Him, and this should lead *you* to Him. Whatever there is, poor Souls, that you need to make you holy and perfect, Christ has it, for the Spirit of God rests on Him and abides in Him without measure! If you need the Grace of penitence, Christ has it to give to you. If you need the Grace of supplication, He has it to give to you. If you need the Grace of faith, He has it! If you need the Grace of holiness, He has it. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "And of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace." John taught this to his hearers and I teach it to you. There is nothing needed between Hell and Heaven but what is in Christ! Nothing needed for the biggest sinner out of Hell to make him the biggest saint in Heaven but what Christ has! Nothing needed in any hour of temptation, in any time of depression—nothing needed in any moment of sickness, or in the article of death, itself—but what it is in Christ and, there for you, if you trust Him! If you are willing to have it, it is freely presented to you. He who makes you willing to receive, is certainly willing to give! If He has emptied you and prepared you to receive of His fullness, do not think that He will refuse you when you come to Him for it! He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Last Sunday morning, I blew the great trumpet in the hope of startling some to Christ [Sermon #1951, Volume 33—*The Pleading of the Last*

Messenger—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] On this occasion, I would ring the little silver bell with a gentle noise in the hope that some may, by that means, be made willing to come to Christ! My Hearer, you can need nothing which Christ does not possess—all your requirements are fully met in Him. The Spirit of God dwells in Him as a fullness—as an abiding fullness—therefore, do but believe in Him! And even that faith He will give you! Do but trust Him and you are saved, and fully supplied in Him who can meet all the necessities of your case.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, John taught the people this that they might be ready for Christ—"a people prepared for the Lord"—for, when men begin to see what a Christ, Christ is, what a Savior the Savior is, then they are ready to come to Him! And I pray that many of you may so come to Him even now.

John also told his hearers that *the Christ whom he preached was able to baptize them with the Holy Spirit*. "See," he says, "I only plunge you in the flowing stream. I can do nothing more for you than dip you in this River Jordan, on profession of your repentance of sin. But this Savior, this Christ of God, can immerse you into the Spirit of God! He can give you of His power to fill you—you can be baptized into the Holy Spirit by Him." Do you hear this, Sinner? Jesus Christ can come and give you the Holy Spirit in such measure that you shall be baptized into Him—

"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity."

This will make you to be really His and make you truly to live unto Him. The very fullness of Grace, then, is with Christ, and He is prepared *to give it*—and this should make men prepared *to receive it*! Did not the poor prodigal son say of the provision in his father's house, "There is bread enough and to spare"? It was partly *that* which made him go to his father's house and we may say of the Spirit who is in Christ, "There is enough and to spare for every poor sinner who comes to Him"—therefore, come along with you—be prepared at once to come and receive the Savior!

Lastly, John said in his preaching, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." *He pointed out Christ as the Sin-Bearer*, bearing human guilt in His own Person. That is the master key which lets men into the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh, how I delight to preach Christ as the Substitute, Christ as the atoning Sacrifice! And when you have heard Christ preached in that way, it makes you ready—"a people prepared for the Lord." How can men come to Christ if they do not know what Christ has done for them? If you do not understand that He suffered in your place, the Just for the unjust, to bring you to God, how can you come to Christ? But when you have learned that holy and blessed doctrine of Christ's Propitiation for human sin, why, then, I think you will leap at the very sound of it and say, "Yes, I will take this Propitiation to be a Sacrifice for me! Blessed Lamb of God—

'My faith would lay her hands
On that dear head of Yours
While like a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin.'"

John's preaching Christ was the best way of making ready "a people prepared for the Lord," and there is no better way of preparing you to come to Jesus. Oh, that God would grant to some of you that "precipitation of decision" of which my learned friend spoke! Oh, that in some lives the turning point might be reached *tonight*—the happy moment when they should decide for Christ! Lord, decide them! My Friend, you have come to the crossroads—perhaps, tonight—if you reject the Savior, it will be your last rejection of Him and it will finally seal your doom! And I am sure, with no perhaps whatever, that if this night you look to Jesus and trust to His finished work, you shall be saved and saved forever!

Here is a text for you—"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Is not that a wonderful "whoever"? "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord" in believing prayer, asking mercy, trusting Christ for mercy, "shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Most of you know these texts by heart—grip them as with hooks of steel! If you say that you are hungry and I put a loaf of bread in front of you, will you sit and look at it all night? If I meet you in a week's time, will you still complain that you are hungry while there is the bread, in front of you, still untouched? You deserve to be hungry if that is the case! You deserve to be famished to death if the bread, being there, you do not take it. Take it and eat it. "May I have it?" asks one. Well, you are *commanded* to have it—this is not a matter that is left to your option! "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." Our Lord, Himself, said, "Repent, you, and believe the Gospel." It is, therefore, a Gospel *command* that you should repent and believe—and truly you may obey a command given by the Lord, Himself! There is no question about your perm*i*ssion to obey it—obey it at once and take Christ to yourself!

"You do not know me," says a sorrowing one over there in the corner, "you do not know me, Sir. Otherwise you would not talk so." I do not need to know you, but if you were the devil's own, if you would but come to Christ, you would be, at once and forever, Christ's own! Though you were sunk almost into Hell by a life of horrible crime, yet if you will *now come and repent of your sin and lay hold on Christ*, you shall be saved! I do not know how to use language that shall be stronger than that, but do not think that I will withdraw it, or qualify it. If I did know how to speak in broader terms, even, than those I have used, I would so speak! You guiltiest of the guilty, you most condemned of all the condemned, for whom the hottest Hell would be your due place, yet come and look to Christ, and you shall live, for *none* are too vile for Him to cleanse, *none* are too guilty for Him to pardon! Oh, that you would believe in Jesus while yet the Gospel bell rings out, "mercy, mercy, mercy!" God help you to do so, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 1:5-17, 3:1-18.

Luke 1:5, 6. *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.* You have, here, a very interesting couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth—a priest with a wife. I have often marveled why the Church of Rome thinks it wrong that priests should be married when it is evident that the priests under the Law were so. The priests had grown so numerous that there was not room for them all to work at the Temple at one time. They were divided into 24 divisions and Zacharias would, therefore, come up to Jerusalem for a fortnight to take his share of the service. Zacharias and Elizabeth were notable for excellence of character—"They were both righteous before God." Not only did they stand high in the esteem of men, but the great God who reads the hearts of all and sees how they live in secret, reckoned them to be righteous—"They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments"—that is, in the moral precepts of the Law—"and ordinances"—that is in the ceremonial rites—"of the Lord, blameless."

7-9. *And they had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well advanced in years. And it came to pass that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the Temple of the Lord.* Certain offices of the priest were considered to be more honorable than others and so, to prevent any jealousy, they cast lots as to which they should take in turn. It fell to the lot of Zacharias to burn incense—this did not happen by chance. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord," and there was a special reason why this good man should stand at the altar at this particular time.

10. *And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense.* While he, in the inner shrine, was burning incense, the multitudes in the outer courts were engaging in prayer. I think that is a very beautiful symbol—the priest unseen, like the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy of Holies above—and the mass of the people engaged in prayer while the unseen priest is offering the sacred perfume before the altar of Jehovah.

11, 12. *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.* He was a good man, yet he was troubled at the sight of an angel. Consciousness of sin, even in an outwardly blameless man, makes us all tremble in the presence of anything heavenly. This bright spirit had come fresh from the courts of God. He was a courtier of the heavenly Temple and he had come down, all of a sudden, with a sweet and cheering message for the earthly priest. But the priest "was troubled, and fear fell upon him." Brothers and Sisters, we cannot know much of Heaven, here below, because it would cause us to tremble. We are as yet unfit for all the glories of that upper state. Good John Berridge wrote—

"And now they range the heavenly plains

And sing their hymns in melting strains.
And now their souls begin to prove
The heights and depths of Jesus' love.
Ah, Lord, with tardy steps I creep
And sometimes sing, and sometimes weep!
Yet strip me of this house of clay
And I will sing as loud as they."

Yes, and so will we—we will be as much at home as the happy saints who dwell in light—when once we are delivered from this hampering flesh and blood!

13. *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard.* The best quietus to fear is answered prayer! If God has heard you, be not you, again, afraid.

13. *And your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name, John.* "The Grace" or, "the gift of God," so the name, "John," signifies. And it is a sweet name for anyone to bear. "You shall call his name, John." I do not think the prayer alluded to here was so much a prayer for a son. If so, I Think that Zacharias had long ago left off praying it, and now his old prayers are heard, after he had discontinued them. I think that it alludes, rather, to his prayer for the coming of the Christ, the appearance of the Messiah—that prayer was heard, as we shall see further on.

14, 15. *And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.* I do not say that it is the duty of every man to drink neither wine nor strong drink, but I beg every man to notice that if anyone was to be peculiarly consecrated to a holy calling, it was always to be so. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink." If there is nothing defiling about wine or strong drink, there is certainly nothing sanctifying about it—and the tendency seems to lie the other way, else it is a strange thing that men dedicated to God were so continually bid to drink neither wine nor strong drink.

15-17. *And he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord, their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* In the third chapter of this Gospel you will find the record of John beginning to fulfill this prophecy concerning himself.

Luke 3:1-7. *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the Book of the words of Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.*

Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Does not John the Baptist speak like Elijah? Here are no honeyed phrases to delight the popular ear! The Prophet of the wilderness talks like one who is all on fire with zeal for God and indignation against evil.

8-11. *Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do, then? He answered and said to them, He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise.* John was wonderfully practical in his advocacy of a holy charity and benevolence. His words cut against all greed, all hoarding, all hardening of the heart towards our fellow men.

12, 13. *Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.* They were accustomed to gather the taxes unfairly and to increase the rates by oppressing the people, getting, perhaps, twice or even ten times more out of them than they could legally claim! John speaks to the point, does he not?

14. *And the soldiers, likewise, demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man.* Those rough Roman soldiers, as they had conquered the country, were very apt to treat the people as though they were their slaves, so John says to them, "Do violence to no man"—

14. *Neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.* "With your rations, your allowances," so it runs. They were very apt to be contending for an increase in their pay and to drag civilians before the courts with false accusations unless they chose to give them bribes to let them go. John does not mince matters with any of his hearers—he speaks with wonderful plainness and courage—and therein proves himself to be a true herald of his Master.

15-18. *And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not, John answered, saying unto them all, I, indeed, baptize you with water; but One mightier than I comes, the laces of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloosen. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.*

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.

JOY, A DUTY
NO. 2405

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 24, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 20, 1887.

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."
Philippians 4:4

THERE is a marvelous medicinal power in joy. Most medicines are distasteful, but this, which is the best of all medicines, is sweet to the taste and comforting to the heart. We noticed, in our reading, that there had been a little tiff between two sisters in the Church at Philippi—I am glad that we do not know what the quarrel was about. I am usually thankful for ignorance on such subjects—but, as a cure for disagreements, the Apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offense or to take offense. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord. Should it not be so? What is this joy but the concord of the soul, the accord of the heart, with the joy of Heaven? Joy in the Lord, then, drives away the discords of earth.

Further, Brothers and Sisters, notice that the Apostle, after he had said, "Rejoice in the Lord always," commanded the Philippians to be careful for nothing, thus implying that joy in the Lord is one of the best preparations for the trials of this life. The cure for care is joy in the Lord! No, my Brother, you will not be able to keep on with your fretfulness. No, my Sister, you will not be able to weary yourself, any longer, with your anxieties if the Lord will but fill you with His joy! Then, being satisfied with your God, yes, *more than satisfied*, and overflowing with delight in Him, you will say to yourself, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance."

What is there on earth that is worth fretting for, even, for five minutes? If one could gain an imperial crown by a day of care, it would be too great an expense for a thing which would bring more care with it. Therefore, let us be thankful, let us be joyful in the Lord. I count it one of the wisest things that, by rejoicing in the Lord, we commence our Heaven here below. It is possible to do so—it is profitable to do so—and we are commanded to do so!

Now I come to the text, itself, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

I. It will be our first business at this time to consider THE GRACE COMMANDED, this Grace of joy. "Rejoice in the Lord," says the Apostle.

In the first place, *this is a very delightful thing.* What a gracious God we serve, who makes delight to be a duty and who commands us to rejoice! Should we not at once be obedient to such a command as this? It is intended that we should be happy. That is the meaning of the precept, that we should be cheerful—more than that, that we should be thankful! More than that, that we should rejoice! I think this word, "rejoice," is almost a French word—it is not only joy, but it is joy over again, *re*-joice! You know *re* usually signifies the re-duplication of a thing, the taking of it over, again. We are to joy, and then we are to re-joy. We are to chew the cud of delight—we are to roll the dainty morsel under our tongue till we get the very essence out of it!

"Rejoice." Joy is a delightful thing. You cannot be too happy, Brothers and Sisters! No, do not suspect yourself of being wrong because you are full of delight. You know it is said of the Divine Wisdom, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Provided that it is joy in the Lord, you cannot have too much of it! The fly is drowned in the honey, or the sweet syrup into which he plunges himself, but this heavenly syrup of delight will not drown your soul or intoxicate your heart! It will do you good, not evil, all the days of your life. God never commanded us to do a thing which would harm us and, when He bids us rejoice, we may be sure that this is as delightful as it is safe, and as safe as it is delightful! Come, Brothers and Sisters, I am inviting you, now, to no distasteful duty when, in the name of my Master, I say to you, as Paul said to the Philippians under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

But, next, *this is a demonstrative duty*—"Rejoice in the Lord." There may be such a thing as a dumb joy, but I hardly think that it can keep dumb long. Joy! Joy! Why, it speaks for itself! It is like a candle lighted in a dark chamber—you need not sound a trumpet and say, "Now light has come." The candle proclaims itself by its own brilliance and, when joy comes into a man, it shines out of his eyes, it sparkles in his countenance! There is a something about every limb of the man that betokens that his body, like a well-tuned harp, has had its strings put in order! Joy—it refreshes the marrow of the bones, it quickens the flowing of the blood in the veins—it is a healthy thing in all respects. It is a speaking thing, a demonstrative thing and, I am sure that joy in the Lord ought to have a tongue! When the Lord sends you affliction, Sister, you generally grumble loudly enough. When the Lord tries you, my dear Brother, you generally speak fast enough about that.

Now, when, on the other hand, the Lord multiplies His mercies to you, speak about it! Sing about it! I cannot remember, since I was a boy, ever seeing in the newspapers, columns of thankfulness and expressions of delight about the prosperity of business in England. It is a long, long time since I was first able to read newspapers—a great many years, now—but I do not remember the paragraphs in which it was said that everybody was getting on in the world and growing rich. But as soon as there was any depression in business, what gloomy articles appeared concerning the dreadful times which had fallen upon the agricultural interest and every other interest! Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, from

the way some of you grumble, I might imagine you were all ruined if I did not know better! I knew some of you when you were not worth two-pence—and you are pretty well-to-do now. You have got on uncommonly well for men who are being ruined! From the way some people talk, you might imagine that everybody is bankrupt and that we are all going to the dogs together! But it is not so and what a pity it is that we do not give the Lord some of our praises when we have better times! If we are so loud and so eloquent over our present woes, why could we not have been as eloquent and as loud in thanksgiving for the blessings that God formerly granted to us? Perhaps the mercies buried in oblivion have been to Heaven and accused us to the Lord and, therefore, He has sent us the sorrows of today. True joy, when it is joy in the Lord, must speak—it cannot hold its tongue—it must praise the name of the Lord!

Further, *this blessed Grace of joy is very contagious.* It is a great privilege, I think, to meet a truly happy man, a graciously happy man. My mind goes back, at this moment, to that dear man of God who used to be with us, years ago, whom we called, "Old Father Dransfield." What a lump of sunshine that man was! I think that I never came into this place with a heavy heart, but the very *sight* of him seemed to fill me with exhilaration, for his joy was wholly in his God! An old man and full of years, but as full of happiness as he was full of days! He was always having something to tell you to encourage you. He constantly made a discovery of some fresh mercy for which we were again to praise God! O dear Brothers and Sisters, let us rejoice in the Lord that we may set others rejoicing! One dolorous spirit brings a kind of plague into the house—one person who is always wretched seems to stop all the birds singing wherever he goes! But, as the birds sing to each other and one morning songster quickens all the rest, and sets the groves ringing with harmony, so will it be with the happy cheerful spirit of a man who obeys the command of the text, "Rejoice in the Lord always." This Grace of joy is contagious!

Besides, dear Brothers and Sisters, *joy in the Lord is influential for good.* I am sure that there is a mighty influence wielded by a consistently joyous spirit. See how little children are affected by the presence of a happy person! There is much more in the tone of the life than there is in the particular fashion of the life. It may be the life of one who is very poor, but oh, how poverty is gilded by a cheerful spirit! It may be the life of one who is well read and deeply instructed, but, oh, if there is a beauty of holiness and a beauty of happiness added to the learning, nobody talks about "the blue stocking," or, "the bookworm" being dull and heavy! Oh, no, there is a charm about holy joy! I wish we had more of it! There are many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar and there are many more sinners brought to Christ by happy Christians than by doleful Christians! Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live and, perhaps some weary sinner who has discovered the emptiness of sinful pleasure, will say to himself, "Why, after all, there must be something real about the joy of these Christians! Let me go and learn how I may have it." And when he comes and sees it in the light of your gladsome countenance, he will be likely to learn it, God helping him, so as never to forget it. "Rejoice in the Lord always," says the Apostle, for joy is a most

influential Grace, and every child of God ought to possess it in a high degree.

I want you to notice, dear Friends, that *this rejoicing is commanded.* It is not a matter that is left to your option. It is not set before you as a desirable thing which you can do without—it is a positive precept of the Holy Spirit to all who are in the Lord—"Rejoice in the Lord always." We ought to obey this precept because joy in the Lord makes us like God. He is the happy God—ineffable bliss is the atmosphere in which He lives and He would have His people to be happy. Let the devotees of Baal cut themselves with knives and lancets, and make hideous outcries if they will, but the servants of Jehovah must not even mar the corners of their beard! Even if they fast, they shall anoint their head and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, for a joyous God desires a joyous people!

You are commanded to rejoice, Brothers and Sisters, because this is for your profit. Holy joy will oil the wheels of your life's machinery. Holy joy will strengthen you for your daily labor. Holy joy will beautify you and, as I have already said, give you an influence over the lives of others. It is upon this point that I would most of all insist—we are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. If you cannot speak the Gospel, *live* the Gospel by your cheerfulness, for what is the Gospel? Glad tidings of great joy and you who believe it must show, by its effect upon you, that it is glad tidings of great joy to you! I believe that a man of God—under trial and difficulty and affliction, bearing up, and patiently submitting with holy acquiescence, and still rejoicing in God—is a real preacher of the Gospel, preaching with an eloquence which is mightier than words can ever be and which will find its secret and silent way into the hearts of those who might have resisted other arguments! Oh, do, then, listen to the text, for it is a command from God—"Rejoice in the Lord always!"

May I just pause, here, and hand this commandment round to all of you who are members of this Church, and to all of you who are truly members of Christ? You are bid to rejoice in the Lord always! You are not allowed to sit there and fret and fume! You are not permitted to complain and groan. Mourner, you are commanded to put on beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning! For this purpose your Savior came—the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him for this very end, that He might make you rejoice! Therefore, sing with the Prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

II. Now we come to the second head, on which I will speak but briefly, that is, THE JOY DISCRIMINATED—"Rejoice *in the Lord."*

Notice *the sphere of this joy.* "Rejoice in the Lord." We read in Scripture that children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." We read of men and women being married "only in the Lord." Now, dear Friends, no child of God must go outside that ring, "in the Lord." There is where you are, where you ought to be, where you *must* be. You cannot truly rejoice if you get outside that ring and, therefore, see that you do nothing which

you cannot do "in the Lord." Mind that you seek no joy which is not joy in the Lord. If you go after the poisonous sweets of this world, woe be to you! Never rejoice in that which is sinful, for all such rejoicing is evil. Flee from it—it can do you no good. That joy which you cannot share with God is not a right joy for you. No! "In the Lord" is the sphere of your joy.

But I think that the Apostle also means that *God is to be the great Object of your joy.* "Rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice in the Father, your Father who is in Heaven, your loving, tender, unchangeable God! Rejoice, too, in the Son, your Redeemer, your Brother, the Husband of your soul, your Prophet, Priest and King! Rejoice, also, in the Holy Spirit, your Quickener, your Comforter, in Him who shall abide with you forever. Rejoice in the one God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—in Him delight yourselves, as it is written, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." We cannot have too much of this joy in the Lord, for the great Jehovah is our exceeding joy! Or if, by, "the Lord," is meant the Lord Jesus, then let me invite, persuade, *command* you to delight in the Lord Jesus, Incarnate in your flesh, dead for your sins, risen for your justification, gone into Glory claiming victory for you, sitting at the right hand of God interceding for you, reigning over all worlds on your behalf and soon to come to take you up into His Glory that you may be with Him forever! Rejoice in the Lord Jesus! This is a sea of delight—blessed are they that dive into its utmost depths!

Sometimes, Brothers and Sisters, you cannot rejoice in anything else, but you can rejoice in the Lord. Then rejoice in Him to the fullest. Do not rejoice in your temporal prosperity, for riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Do not rejoice, even, in your great successes in the work of God. Remember how the 70 disciples came back to Jesus and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name," and He answered, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." Do not rejoice in your privileges—I mean, do not make the great joy of your life to be the fact that you are favored with this and that external privilege or ordinance—but rejoice in God! He changes not. If the Lord is your joy, your joy will never dry up! All other things are but for a season, but God is forever and ever. Make Him your joy, the *whole* of your joy, and then let this joy absorb your every thought! Be baptized into this joy! Plunge into the deeps of this unutterable bliss of joy in God!

III. Thirdly, let us think of THE TIME APPOINTED for this rejoicing—"Rejoice in the Lord *always*."

"Always." Well, then, that begins at once, certainly. So let us now begin to rejoice in the Lord. If any of you have taken a gloomy view of religion, I beseech you to throw that gloomy view away at once. "Rejoice in the Lord always," therefore, rejoice in the Lord *now*! I recollect what a damper I had, as a young Christian, when I had but lately believed in Jesus Christ. I felt that, as the Lord had said, "He that believes in Me has everlasting life," I, having believed in Him, had everlasting life and I said so, with the greatest joy and delight and enthusiasm, to an old Christian man. And he said to me, "Beware of presumption! There are a great many

who think they have eternal life, but who have not got it." That was quite true, but, for all that, is there not more presumption in *doubting* God's promise than there is in *believing* it?

Is there any presumption in taking God at His Word? Is there not gross presumption in hesitating and questioning as to whether these things are so or not? If God says that they are so, then they are so, whether I feel that they are so or not—and it is my place, as a Believer—to accept God's bare Word and rest on it. "We count checks as cash," said one who was making up accounts. Good checks are to be counted as cash and the promises of God, though as yet unfulfilled, are as good as the blessings, themselves, for God cannot lie, or make a promise that He will not perform! Let us, therefore, not be afraid of being glad, but begin to be glad, at once, if we have, up to now, taken a gloomy view of true religion and have been afraid to rejoice.

When are we to be glad? "Rejoice in the Lord always." That is, *when you cannot rejoice in anything or anyone but God.* When the fig tree does not blossom, when there is no fruit on the vine and no herd in the stall. When everything withers and decays and perishes. When the worm at the root of the gourd has made it die, then rejoice in the Lord! When the day darkens into evening and the evening into midnight—and the midnight into a sevenfold horror of great darkness—rejoice in the Lord! And when that darkness does not clear, but becomes more dense and Egyptian. When night succeeds night and neither sun nor moon nor stars appear, still rejoice in the Lord always! He who uttered these words had been a night and a day in the deep. He had been stoned, he had suffered from false brethren. He had been in peril of his life and yet, most fittingly do those lips cry out to us, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Yes, at the stake, itself, martyrs have fulfilled this Word of God—they clapped their hands amid the fire that was consuming them! Therefore, rejoice in the Lord when you cannot rejoice in any other.

But also take care that you *rejoice in the Lord when you have other things to rejoice in.* When He loads your table with good things and your cup is overflowing with blessings, rejoice in *Him* more than in *them.* Forget not that the Lord, your Shepherd, is better than the green pastures and the still waters—rejoice not in the pastures or in the waters in comparison with your joy in the Shepherd who gives you all! Let us never make gods out of our goods! Let us never allow what God gives us to supplant the Giver. Shall the wife love the jewels that her husband gave her more than she loves him who gave them to her? That were an evil love, or no love at all! So, let us love God, first, and rejoice in the Lord always when the day is brightest and multiplied are the other joys that He permits us to have.

"Rejoice in the Lord always." That is, *if you have not rejoiced before, begin to do so at once. A*nd *when you have long rejoiced, keep on at it.* I have known, sometimes, that things have gone so smoothly that I have said, "There will be a check to this prosperity! I know that there will. Things cannot go on quite so pleasantly always."—

"More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests lowering overhead."

One is apt to spoil his joy by the apprehension that there is some evil coming. Now listen to this—"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "Rejoice in the Lord always." Do not anticipate trouble. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Take the good that God provides you and rejoice not merely in it, but in Him who provided it. So may you enjoy it without fear, for there is good salt with that food which is eaten as coming from the hand of God.

"Rejoice in the Lord always." That is, *when you get into company, then rejoice in the Lord.* Do not be ashamed to let others see that you are glad. *Rejoice in the Lord, also, when you are alone.* I know what happens to some of you on Sunday night. You have had such a blessed Sabbath and you have gone away from the Lord's Table with the very flavor of Heaven in your mouths! And then some of you have had to go home where everything is against you. The husband does not receive you with any sympathy with your joy, or the father does not welcome you with any fellowship in your delight. Well, but still, "Rejoice in the Lord *always.*" When you cannot get anybody else to rejoice with you, still continue to rejoice! There is a way of looking at everything which will show you that the blackest cloud has a silver lining. There is a way of looking at all things in the Light of God which will turn into sweetness that which otherwise had been bitter as gall!

I do not know whether any of you keep a quassia cup at home. If you do, you know that it is made of wood, and you pour water into the bowl and the water turns bitter, directly, before you drink it. You may keep this cup as long as you like, but it always embitters the water that is put into it. I think that I know some dear Brothers and Sisters who always seem to have one of these cups handy. Now, instead of that, I want you to buy a cup of another kind that shall make everything sweet, whatever it is! Whatever God pleases to pour out of the bowl of Providence shall come into your cup and your contentment, your delight in God, shall sweeten it all! God bless you, dear Friends, with much of this holy joy!

IV. So now I finish with the fourth head, which is this, THE EMPHASIS LAID ON THE COMMAND—"Rejoice in the Lord always: *and again I say, Rejoice.*" What does that mean, "Again I say, Rejoice"?

This was, first, *to show Paul's love for the Philippians.* He wanted them to be happy. They had been so kind to him and they had made him so happy, that he said, "Oh, dear Brothers, do rejoice! Dear Sisters, do rejoice! I say it twice over to you, 'Be happy, be happy,' because I love you so much that I am anxious to have you, beyond all things else, rejoice in the Lord always."

I also think that, perhaps, he said it twice over to suggest the *difficulty of continual joy.* It is not so easy as some think to always rejoice. It may be for you young people, who are yet strong in limb, who have few aches and pains and none of the infirmities of life. It may be an easy thing to those placed in easy circumstances, with few cares and difficulties. But there are some of God's people who need great Grace if they are to rejoice in the Lord always. And the Apostle knew that, so he said, "Again I say, Rejoice." He repeats the precept, as much as to say, "I know it is a diffi-

cult thing and so I the more earnestly press it upon you. Again I say, Rejoice."

I think, too, that he said it twice over, *to assert the possibility of it.* This was as much as if he had said, "I told you to rejoice in the Lord always. You opened your eyes and looked with astonishment upon me, but, 'Again I say, Rejoice.' It is possible, it is practicable! I have not spoken unwisely. I have not told you to do what you never can do, but with deliberation I write it down, 'Again I say, Rejoice.' You can be happy! God the Holy Spirit can lift you above the doldrums of the flesh, and of the world, and of the devil—and you may be enabled to live upon the mountain of God beneath the shinings of His face! 'Again I say, Rejoice.'"

Do you not think that this was intended, also, *to impress upon them the importance of the duty?* "*Again* I say, Rejoice." Some of you will go and say, "I do not think that it matters much whether I am happy or not. I shall get to Heaven, however gloomy I am, if I am sincere." "No," says Paul, "that kind of talk will not do! I cannot have you speak like that. Come, I must have you rejoice! I really conceive it to be a Christian's bounden duty and so, 'Again, I say, Rejoice.'"

But do you not think, also, that Paul repeated the command *to allow for special personal testimony?* "*Again,* I say, Rejoice. I, Paul, a sufferer to the utmost extent for Christ's sake, even now an ambassador in bonds, shut up in a dungeon—I say to you, Rejoice." Paul was a greatly-tried man, but he was a blessedly happy man. There is not one of us but would gladly change conditions with Paul, if that were possible, now that we see the whole of his life written out. And tonight, looking across the ages, over all the scenes of trouble which he encountered, he says to us, "Brothers and Sisters, rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

Did you ever notice how full of joy this Epistle to the Philippians is? Will you spare me just a minute while I get you to run your eyes through it to observe what a joyful letter it is? You notice that, in the first chapter, Paul gets only as far as the fourth verse when he says, "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." Now he is in his right vein! He is so glad because of what God has done for the Philippians that when he prays for them, he mixes joy with his prayer! In the 16th verse he declares that he found joy, even, in the opposition of those who preached Christ in order to rival him. Hear what he says—"The one preaches Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."

And he does not finish the chapter till, in the 25th verse, he declares that he had joy, even, in the expectation of not going to Heaven just yet, but living a little longer to do good to these people—"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." You see it is joy, joy, joy, joy! Paul seems to go from rung to rung of the ladder of the Light of

God, as if he were climbing up from Nero's dungeon into Heaven, itself, by way of continual joy! So he writes, in the second verse of the second chapter, "Fulfill you my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." When he gets to the 16th verse, he says, "That I may rejoice in the Day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain."

But I am afraid that I should weary you if I went through the Epistle thus, slowly, verse by verse. Just notice how he begins the third chapter—"Finally, my Brothers and Sisters, rejoice in the Lord." The word is sometimes rendered "farewell." When he says, "Rejoice," it is the counterpart of, "welcome." We say to a man who comes to our house, "Salve"—"Welcome." When he goes away, it is our duty to "speed the parting guest" and say, "Farewell." This is what Paul meant to say here. "Finally, my Brothers and Sisters, fare you well in the Lord. Be happy in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord." And I do not think that I can finish up my sermon better than by saying on this Sabbath night, "Finally, my Brothers and Sisters, fare you well, be happy in the Lord."—

"Fare you well! And if forever,
Still forever, fare you well."

May that be your position, to so walk with God that your fare shall be that of angels! May you eat angels' food, the manna of God's love! May your drink be from the Rock that flows with a pure stream! So may you feed and so may you drink until you come unto the mountain of God, where you shall see His face unveiled and, standing in His exceeding brightness, shall know His Glory, being glorified with the saved! Till then, be happy. Why, even—

"The thought of such amazing bliss,
Should constant joys create."

Be happy! If the present is dreary, it will soon be over. Oh, but a little while and we shall be transferred from these seats below to the thrones above! We shall go from the place of aching brows to the place where they all wear crowns! From the place of weary hands to where they bear the palm branch of victory! From the place of mistake and error and sin, and consequent grief, to the place where they are without fault before the Throne of God, for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

Come, then, let us make a solemn league and covenant together in the name of God, and let it be called, "The Guild of the Happy," for the—

"Favorites of the Heavenly King
May speak their joys abroad."

No, they *must* speak their joys abroad! Let us endeavor to do so, always, by the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PHILIPPIANS 4.

This Epistle was written by Paul when he was in prison with iron fetters about his wrists, yet there is no iron in the Epistle. It is full of light, life, love and joy—blended with traces of sorrow—yet with a holy delight that rises above his grief.

Verse 1. *Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.* See how the heart of the Apostle is at work! His emotions are not dried up by his personal griefs. He takes a delight in his friends at Philippi! He has a lively recollection of the time when he and Silas were shut up in prison, there, and that same night baptized the jailor and his household—and formed the Church at Philippi!

2. *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.* These two good women had fallen out with one another. Paul loves them so much that he would not have any strife in the Church to mar its harmony and he, therefore, beseeches both of these good women to end their quarrel, and to, "be of the same mind in the Lord." You cannot tell what hurt may come to a Church through two members being at enmity against each other. They may be unknown persons. They may be Christian women, but they can work no end of mischief and, therefore, it is a most desirable thing that they should speedily come together, again, in peace and unity.

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.* He tenderly thinks of all those who had helped the work of the Lord and, in return, he would have all of them helped, and kindly remembered, and affectionately cherished. May we always have this tender feeling towards one another—especially towards those who work for the Lord with us! May we always delight in cheering those who serve our Lord!

4, 5. *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.* We have come to understand this word, "moderation," in a sense not at all intended here. The best translation would probably be, "forbearance." Do not get angry with anybody. Do not begin to get fiery and impetuous—be forbearing, for the Lord is at hand. You cannot tell how soon He may appear. There is no time to spare for the indulgence of anger. Be quiet. Be patient and if there is anything very wrong, well, leave it. Our Lord Jesus will come very soon, therefore be not impatient.

6. *Be careful*—That is, be anxious—

6. *For nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.* See how the Apostle would bid us throw anxiety to the winds—let us try to do so. You cannot turn one hair white or black, fret as you may. You cannot add a cubit to your stature, be you as anxious as you please. It will be for your own advantage and it will be for God's Glory for you to shake off the anxieties which otherwise might overshadow your spirit. Be anxious about nothing, but prayerful about everything—and be thankful about everything as well! Is not that a beautiful trait in Paul's character? He is a prisoner at Rome and likely soon to die—yet he mingles thanksgiving with his supplication and asks others to do the same! We have always something for which to thank God, therefore let us also obey the Apostolic injunction.

7, 8. *And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, Brothers and Sisters, 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.* If there is any really good movement in the world, help it, you Christian people! If it is not purely and absolutely religious, yet if it tends to the benefit of your fellow men, if it promotes honesty, justice, purity, take care that you are on that side and do all you can to help it forward.

9. *Those things, which you have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.* Paul was a grand preacher to be able to say that—to hold up his own example, as well as his own teaching as a thing which the people might safely follow!

9. *And the God of peace shall be with you.* In the seventh verse, we had the expression, "the peace of God." In this ninth verse, we have the mention of, "the God of peace." May we first enjoy the peace of God and then be helped by the Spirit of God to get into a still higher region where we shall be more fully acquainted with the God of peace!

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.* "I rejoiced." So Paul was, himself, in a happy mood! These saints in Philippi had sent to him in prison a gift by the hand of one of their pastors, and Paul, in his deep poverty, had been much comforted by their kind thoughtfulness about him.

11. *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.* That was not an easy lesson to learn, especially when one of those states meant being in prison at Rome. If he was ever in the Mammertine, those of us who have been in that dungeon would confess that it would take a deal of Grace to make us content to be there! And if he was shut up in the prison of the Palatine Hill, in the barracks near the morass, it was, to say the least, not a desirable place to be. A soldier chained to your hand day and night, however good a fellow he may be, does not always make the most delightful company for you, nor you for him—and it takes some time to learn to be content with such a companion. But, says Paul, "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: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.* These are both hard lessons to learn. I do not know which is the more difficult of the two. Probably it is easier to know how to go down than to know how to go up. How many Christians have I seen grandly glorifying God in sickness and poverty when they have come down in the world, and ah, how often have I seen other Christians *dishonoring* God when they have grown rich, or when they have risen to a position of influence among their fellow men! These two lessons, Grace, alone, can fully teach us.

13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.* What a gracious attainment! There is no boasting in this declaration. Paul only spoke what was literally the truth.

14, 15. *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.* The Philippians were the only Christians who had sent any help to this great sufferer for Christ's sake in the time of his need.

16-18. *For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 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.* I do not suppose that they sent him very much, but he knew the love that prompted the gift—he understood what they meant by it. I always had a fancy that Lydia was the first to suggest that kind deed. She, the first convert of the Philippian Church, thought of Paul, I doubt not, and said to the other Believers, "Let us take care of him as far as we can. See how he spends his whole life in the Master's service, and now he may, at last, die in prison for lack of even common necessities. Let us send a present to him in Rome." How grateful is the Apostle for that gift of love! What gladness they had put into his heart! Now he says—

19. *But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* "You have supplied my need out of your poverty. My God shall supply all your need out of His riches. Your greatest need shall not exceed the liberality of His supplies."

20, 21. *Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.* The religion of Christ is full of courtesy and it is full of generous thoughtfulness. I do not think that he can be a Christian who has no knowledge nor care about his fellow Church members.

21. *The Brothers and Sisters which are with me greet you.* They saw that he was writing a letter and they, therefore, said, "Send our love to the Philippians."

2. *All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.* Only think of saints in the household of Nero, saints in the service of such a demon as he was, and saints who were first in every good thing! "Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household."

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

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 720, 870.

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.

AN APPEAL TO CHILDREN OF GODLY PARENTS
NO. 2406

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 31, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1887.

"My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck. When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Proverbs 6:20-23.

You have here, before you, the advice of King Solomon, rightly reckoned to be one of the wisest of men, and verily he must be wise, indeed, who could excel in wisdom the son of David, the King of Israel. It is worth while to listen to what Solomon has to say—it must be good for the most intelligent young person to listen—and to listen carefully, to what so experienced a man as Solomon has to say to young men. But I must remind you that a greater than Solomon is here, for the Spirit of God inspired the Proverbs! They are not merely jewels from earthly mines, but they are also precious treasures from the heavenly hills, so that the advice we have, here, is not only the counsel of a wise man, but the advice of that Incarnate Wisdom who speaks to us out of the Word of God! Would you become the sons of wisdom? Come and sit at the feet of Solomon! Would you become spiritually wise? Come and hear what the Spirit of God has to say by the mouth of this wise man!

In considering this subject, I am going, first of all, to show you that *true godliness*, of which the wise man, here, speaks, *comes to many of us recommended by parental example*—"My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck." But, in addition to that, true religion comes to us commended by practical uses, by its beneficial effect upon our lives—"When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life."

I. Now, in the first place, I want to show you that TRUE RELIGION COMES TO MANY OF US RECOMMENDED BY PARENTAL EXAMPLE.

Unhappily, it is not so with all of you. There are some who had an evil example in their childhood and who never learned anything that was good from their parents. I adore the sovereignty of Divine Grace that there are among us, tonight, many who are the first in their families that ever made a profession of faith in Christ. They were born and brought up in the midst of everything that was opposed to godliness, yet here they are—they can, themselves, hardly tell you how—brought out from the world as Abraham was brought from Ur of the Chaldees. The Lord in His Grace has taken one of a city and two of a family, and brought them to Zion. You, dear Friends, have special cause for thankfulness, but it should be a note to be entered in your diary that your children shall not be subjected to the same disadvantages as you, yourselves, suffered. Since the Lord has looked in love upon you, let your households be holiness to the Lord and so bring up your children that they shall have every advantage that religious training can give—and every opportunity to serve the living God.

But there are many among us, I believe the larger proportion of those gathered here, who have had the immense privilege of godly training. Now, to my mind, it seems that a father's experience is the best evidence that a young man can have of the truth of *anything*. My father would not say that which was false anywhere to anyone, but I am sure that he would not say it to his son and if, after serving God for 50 years, he has found religion to be a failure, even if he had not the courage to communicate it to the whole world, I feel persuaded that he would have whispered in my ear, "My son, I have misled you. I was mistaken and I have found it out." But when I saw the old man, the other day, he had no such information to convey to me. Our conversation was concerning the faithfulness of God and he delights to tell of the faithfulness of God to him and to his father, my dear grandfather, who has now gone up above. How often have they told me that, in a long lifetime of testing and proving the promises, they have found them all true and they could say, in the language of the hymn—

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live.
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."

As for myself, if I had found out that I was mistaken, I would not have been so foolish as to rejoice that my sons should follow the same way of life, and should addict themselves with all their might to preaching the same Truths of God that I delight to proclaim! Dear son, if you have a godly father, believe that the religion upon which he has fixed his faith is true. He tells you that it is so—he is, at any rate, a sincere and honest witness to you. I beseech you, therefore, forsake not your father's God.

Then I think that one of the most tender bonds that can ever bind man or woman is the affection of a mother. Many would, perhaps, break away from the law of the father—but the love of the mother—who among us can break away from that? So, next, a *mother's affection is the best of*

arguments. You remember how she prayed for you? Among your earliest recollections is that of her taking you between her knees and teaching you to say—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."

Perhaps you have tried to disbelieve, but your mother's firm faith prevents it. I have heard of one who said that he could easily have been an infidel if it had not been for his mother's life and his mother's death. Yes, these are hard arguments to get over and I trust that you will not get over them! You remember well her quiet patience in the house when there was much that might have ruffled her. You remember her gentleness with you when you were going a little wild. You hardly know, perhaps, how you cut her to the heart, how her nights were sleepless because her boy did not love his mother's God. I charge you, by the love you bear her, if you have received any impressions that are good, cherish them, and cast them not aside! Or if you have received no such impressions, yet at least let the sincerity of your mother, for whom it was impossible to have been untrue—let the deep affection of your mother, who could not, and would not, betray you into a lie—persuade you that there is Truth in this religion which now, perhaps, some of your companions are trying to teach you to deride. "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother."

I think that to any young man, or any young woman, also, who has had a godly father and mother, the best way of life that they can mark out for themselves is *to follow the road in which their father's and mother's principles would conduct them*. Of course, we make great advances on the old folks, do we not? The young men are wonderfully bright and intelligent, and the old people are a good deal behind them! Yes, yes—that is the way we talk before our beards have grown. Possibly, when we have more sense, we shall not be quite so conceited. At any rate, I, who am not very old, but who dares not, any longer, call myself young, venture to say that, for myself, I desire nothing so much as to continue the traditions of my household. I wish to find no course but that which shall run parallel with that of those who have gone before me.

And I think, dear Friends, that you who have seen the holy and happy lives of Christian ancestors will be wise to pause a good deal before you begin to make a deviation, either to the right or to the left, from the course of those godly ones. I do not believe that he begins life in a way which God is likely to bless and which he, himself, will, in the long run, judge to be wise, who begins with the notion that he shall upset everything—that all that belonged to his godly family shall be cast to the winds! I do not seek to have heirlooms of gold or silver but, though I die a thousand deaths, I can never give up my father's God, my grandfather's God, and his father's God, and his father's God! I must hold this to be the chief possession that I have, and I pray young men and women to think the same. Do not stain the glorious traditions of noble lives that

have been handed down to you! Do not disgrace your father's shield! Bespatter not the escutcheons of your honored predecessors by any sins and transgressions on your part! God help you to feel that the best way of leading a noble life will be to do as they did who trained you in God's fear!

Solomon tells us to do two things with the teachings which we have learned of our parents. First he says, "Bind them continually upon your heart," *for they are worthy of loving adherence*. Show that you love these things by binding them upon your heart. The heart is the vital point—let godliness lie there—love the things of God. If we could take young men and women and make them professedly religious without their truly loving godliness, that would be simply to make them hypocrites, which is not what we desire. We do not want you to say that you believe what you do not believe, or that you rejoice in what you do not rejoice in. But our prayer—and oh, that it might be *your* prayer, too!—is that you may be helped to bind these things about your heart. They are worth living for! They are worth dying for! They are worth more than all the world besides—the immortal principles of the Divine Life which comes from the death of Christ! "Bind them continually upon your heart."

And then Solomon, because he would not have us keep these things secret as if we were ashamed of them, adds, "and tie them about your neck," *for they are worthy of boldest display*. Did you ever see my Lord Mayor wearing his chain of office? He is not at all ashamed to wear it. And the sheriffs with their badges—I have a lively recollection of the enormous size to which those ornaments attain—and they take care to wear them, too. Now then, you who have any love to God, tie your religion about your neck! Do not be ashamed of it, put it on as an ornament, wear it as the mayor does his chain! When you go into company, never be ashamed to say that you are a Christian, and if there is any company where you cannot go as a Christian, well, do not go there at all. Say to yourself, "I will not be where I could not introduce my Master. I will not go where He could not go with me." You will find that resolve to be a great help to you in the choice of where you will go and where you will not go—therefore bind it upon your heart, tie it about your neck! God help you to do this and so to follow those godly ones who have gone before you!

I hope that I am not weak in wishing that some here may be touched by affection to their parents. I have had very sorrowful sights, sometimes, in the course of my ministry. A dear father, an honest, upright, godly man, is perhaps present, but he will not mind my saying what lines of grief I saw upon his face when he came to say to me, "Oh, Sir, my boy is in prison!" I am sure that if his boy could have seen his father's face as I saw it, it would have been worse than prison to him! I have known young men who have come to this Tabernacle with their parents—nice boys, too, they were. And they have gone into employment in the city where they have been tempted to steal—and they have yielded to the tempter

and have lost their character. Sometimes, the deficiency has been met and they have been rescued from a criminal's career, but, alas, sometimes they have fallen into the hands of a wicked woman and then woe betide them!

Occasionally, it has seemed to be sheer wantonness and wickedness that has made them act unrighteously. I wish I could fetch those young men—I do not suppose that they are here, tonight—and let them see not merely the misery they will bring upon themselves, but show them their mother at home when news came that John had lost his job because he had been acting dishonestly, or give them a glimpse of their father's face when the evil tidings reached him. The poor man stood aghast! He said, "There was never a stain upon the character of any of my family, before." If the earth had opened under the godly man's feet, or if the good mother could have gone down straight into the grave, they would have preferred it to the lifelong tribulation which has come upon them!

Therefore, I charge you, young man, or young woman, do not kill the parents who gave you life! Do not disgrace those who brought you up. But I pray you, instead thereof, seek the God of your father, and the God of your mother, and give yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and live wholly to Him.

II. Now I must turn to my second point, which is that TRUE RELIGION COMES TO US COMMENDED BY PRACTICAL USES. This is a less sentimental argument than the one I have been pleading, but, to many, vital godliness appeals because of its immense utility in the actual everyday life of men.

Solomon tells us, first, *that true godliness serves us for instruction*—"For the commandment is a lamp." If you would know all that you ought to know, read this Book. If you would know in your heart that which shall be for you present and eternal good, love this Book, believe the Truths of God it teaches and obey it, "for the commandment is a lamp."

Next, *true religion serves us for direction*—"and the law is light." If we want to know what we should do, we cannot do better than yield ourselves up to the guidance of the Divine Spirit and take this Word as our map, for—

"'Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,
That guides us all the day.
And through the dangers of the night,
A lamp to lead our way."

Solomon also tells us that *true religion guides us under all circumstances*. He says, in the 22nd verse, that when we are active, there is nothing like true godliness to help us—"When you go, it shall lead you." He tells us that when we are resting, there is nothing better than this for our preservation—"When you sleep, it shall keep you." And when we are just waking, there is nothing better than this with which to delight the mind—"When you awake, it shall talk with you." I do not intend to expand those three thoughts except to say this—when you are busiest, you religion shall be your best help. When your hands are full of toil and your

head is full of thought, nothing can do you more service than to have a God to go to, a Savior to trust in, a Heaven to look forward to! And when you go to your bed to sleep, or to be sick, you can have nothing better to smooth your pillow and to give you rest than to know that you are forgiven through the precious blood of Christ, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Often, before I fall asleep, I say to myself those words of Watts—

"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior's breast"

and there is no more delicious sleep in the world than that sleep which, even in dreams, keeps near to Christ! Some of us know what it is, even in those wanderings of our mind in sleep, not to quit the holy ground of communion with our Lord. It is not always so, but it is sometimes so, and even then, when the mind has lost power to control its thoughts, even the thoughts seem to dance, like Miriam, to the praise of God! Oh, happy men, whose religion is their protection even in their sleep!

And then Solomon says, "when you awake, it shall talk with you." This Bible is a wonderful talking book—there is a great mass of blessed talk in this precious volume! It has told me a great many of my faults. It would tell you yours if you would let it. It has told me much to comfort me and it has much to tell you if you will but incline your ears to it. It is a book that is wonderfully communicative. It knows all about you, all the ins and outs of where you are, and where you ought to be. It can tell you everything. The best communion that a man can have is when he commences with God in prayer and the reading of the Word—"When you awake, it shall talk with you."

I have hurried over that point because I want to say something else to you. Dear Friends, those of you who are unconverted, our great anxiety is that you should know the Lord at once. And our reason is this—that *it will prepare you for the world to come*. Whatever that world may be, full of vast mysteries, yet no man is so prepared to launch upon the unknown sea as the one who is reconciled to God—who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, who trusts Him and rejoices in the pardon of his sin through the great Atoning Sacrifice—and experiences in his own heart the marvelous change which has made him a new creature in Christ Jesus! The great reason, I say again, why we wish to have our dear friends converted is that they may be ready for the world to come. You will soon die, all of you. I think it was last Sunday evening that there sat, in that pew just over there, a friend who was generally here in the morning and evening, but on Wednesday he died quite suddenly. He appeared to be in good health, but he died at the railway station, away from home. That seat where he used to sit ought to have a warning voice to all of us, crying aloud, "Prepare to meet your God!" It might have been me—it might have been any of these friends around me on the platform—it might have been any of you in the congregation. Who can tell who will go this week?

Probably some one or other of us (our number is so large) will be taken away before another Sabbath bell shall be heard!

I think that is a very good reason for seeking the Lord, that you may be prepared for eternity. One day this week I saw an aged friend who cannot live much longer. She is 86 and her faculties are failing her, but she said to me, "I have no fear, I have no fear of death. I am on the Rock, I am on the Rock, Christ Jesus. I know whom I have believed and I know where I am going." It was delightful to hear the aged saint speak like that. And we are always hearing such talk from our dear friends when they are going Home—they never seem to have any doubts. I have known some who, while they were well, had many doubts, but when they came to die, they seemed to have none at all, but were joyously confident in Christ.

But there is another reason why we want our friends converted and that is *that they may be prepared for this life*. I do not know what kind of life you have set before yourself. Perhaps I may be addressing some young men who are going to the University and they hope to have lives consecrated to learning and crowned with honor. Possibly, some here have no prospect but that of working hard to earn their bread with the sweat of their brow. Some have begun to lay bricks, or to drive the plane, or to wield the pen. There are all sorts of ways of mortal life, but there is no better provision and preparation for *any* kind of life on earth than to know the Lord and to have a new heart and a right spirit! He that rules millions of men will do it better with the Grace of God in his heart. And he that had to be a slave would be the happier in his lot for having the Grace of God in his heart. You that are old and you that are young, you that are masters and you that are servants—true religion cannot disqualify you for playing your part here in the great drama of life—but the best preparation for that part, if it is a part that ought to be played, is to know the Lord and feel the power of Divine Grace upon your soul!

Let me just show you how this is the case. The man who lives before God, who calls God his Father and feels the Spirit of God working within him a hatred of sin and a love of righteousness, he is the man who will be *conscientious in the discharge of his duties* and, you know, that is the kind of man, and the kind of woman, too, that we need nowadays. We have so many people who need looking after—if you give them anything to do, they will do it quickly enough if you stand and look on—but the moment you turn your back, they will do it as slovenly, or as slowly and as badly as can be. They are eye-servants only. If you were to advertise for an eye-servant, I do not suppose *anybody* would come to you, yet they might come in shoals, for there are plenty of them about! Well now, a truly Christian, a man who is really converted, sees that he serves God in doing his duty to his fellow men. "You, God, see me," is the power that always influences him, and he desires to be conscientious in the discharge of his duties whatever those duties may be.

I once told you the story of the servant girl who said that she hoped she was converted. Her minister asked her this question, "What evidence can you give of your conversion?" She gave this among a great many other proofs, but it was not a bad one. She said, "Now, Sir, I always sweep *under* the mats." It was a small matter, but if you carry out in daily life that principle of sweeping under the mats, that is the kind of thing we need. Many people have a little corner where they stow away all the fluff and the dust—and the room looks as if it was nicely swept, but it is not. There is a way of doing everything so that nothing is really done, but that is not the case where there is Grace in the heart. Grace in the heart makes a man feel that he would wish to live wholly to God—and serve God in serving man. If you get that Grace, you will have a grand preparation for life as well as for death!

The next thing is that a man who has a new heart has imparted to him *a purity which preserves him in the midst of temptation*. Oh, this dreadful city of London! I wonder why God endures the filth of it? I frequently converse with good young men who come up from the country to their first job in London. And the first week they live in London is a revelation to them which makes their hair almost stand on end! They see what they never dreamed of. Well now, you young fellows who have just come to London—perhaps this is your first Sunday—give yourselves to the Lord at once, I pray you! Yield yourselves to Jesus Christ, tonight, for another week in London may be your damnation! Only a week in London may have led you into acts of impurity that shall ruin you forever! Before you have gone into those things, devote yourselves to God and to His Christ, so that with pure hearts and with right spirits you may be preserved from "the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wastes at noonday," in this terribly wicked city.

There is no hope for you young men and young women in this great world of wickedness unless your hearts are right towards God. If you go in thoroughly to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, He will keep and preserve you even to the end. But if you do not give yourselves to the Lord, whatever good resolutions you may have formed, you are doomed—I am sure you are—to be carried away with the torrents of iniquity that run down our streets today! Purity of heart, then, which comes from faith in Christ is a splendid preparation for life!

So also is *truthfulness of speech*. Oh, what a wretched thing it is when people tell lies! Now, the heart that is purified by the Grace of God hates the thought of a lie. The man speaks the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth—and he is the man who shall pass through life unscathed—and shall be honored and, in the long run, successful. He may have to suffer for a time through his truthfulness, but, in the end, nothing shall clear a way for him so well as being true in thought and word and deed. If you love the Lord with all your heart, you will also learn honesty in dealing—and that is a grand help in life. I know that the trickster does, sometimes, seem to succeed for a time, but what is his

success? It is a success which is only another name for *ruin*. Oh, dear Sirs, if all men could be made honest, how much more of happiness there would be in the world! And the way to be upright among men is to be sincere towards God—and to have the Spirit of God dwelling within you.

Again, true religion is of this value, that *it comforts a man under great troubles*. You do not expect many troubles, my young Friend, but you will have them! You expect that you will be married and then your troubles will be over—but some say that then they begin! I do not endorse that statement, but I am sure that they are not over, for there is another set of trials that then begin. But you are going to get out of your apprenticeship and then it will be all right—will it? Journeymen do not always find it so. But you do not mean, always, to be a journeyman—you are going to be a little master. Ask the masters whether everything is pleasant with them in these times. If you want to escape trouble altogether, you had better go up in a balloon—but then I am sure that you would be in trouble for fear of going up too high or coming down too fast! But troubles will come and what is there that can preserve a man in the midst of trouble like feeling that things are safe in his Father's hands? If you can say, "I am His child and all things are working together for my good. I have committed myself entirely into the hands of Him who cannot err and will never do me an unkindness," why, Sir, you have on a breastplate which the darts of care cannot pierce! You are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace and you may tread on the briars of the wilderness with unwounded feet.

True religion will also build up in you *firmness of character*, and that is another quality that I want to see in our young people, nowadays. We have some splendid men in this place, and some splendid women, too. I should not be afraid, if the devil, himself, were to preach here, that he would pervert them from the faith. And if all the new heresies that can rise were to be proclaimed in their presence, they know too well what the Truth of God is ever to be led astray. But, on the other hand, we have a number of people who are led by their ears. If I pull their ears one way, they come after me. If they happen to go somewhere else and somebody pulls their ears the other way, they go after him. There are lots of people who never do their own thinking, but put it out, as they put out their washing—they do not think of doing it at home!

Well now, these people are just like the chaff on the threshing floor, and when the wind begins to blow, away they go! Do not be like that! Dear young sons and daughters of the Church members, here, know the Lord! May He reveal Himself to you at once and when you do know Him, and get a grip of the Gospel, bind it to your heart and tie it about your neck, and say, "Yes, I am going to follow in the footsteps of those I love, and especially in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ"—

"'Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes.'"

God help you to do it! But first believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—trust yourselves wholly to Him—and He will give you Grace to stand fast even to the end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:1-16.

The first eight verses of this Psalm, in the Hebrew, begin with the letter A, and the second eight begin with the letter B. The whole Psalm is the good man's alphabet. The Holy Spirit condescended to use these expedients to help the memory of the readers of Holy Scripture. We should be thankful for this. I have sometimes heard preachers blamed for dividing their discourses in such a way as to help the memory of their hearers. The preacher may well bear that blame without any regret, since the Spirit of God, here, condescends to alliteration and to alphabetical arrangement in order to help the memories of readers. Thus the Psalm begins

Verse 1. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the LORD.* If there are any people in the world who are blessed, surely it must be those who are in God's way and who take care to keep their garments unspotted from the world. Oh, if one can feel, at the end of every day, "I am undefiled in God's way, and I have walked in His Law," how sweet it is in such a case to fall asleep, not self-righteous and boastful, but yet thankful to have been kept from the iniquity that abounds in the world! Truly, "blessed are the undefiled in the way." Perhaps some of you cannot claim this particular blessing—then remember that there is another Psalm (the 32nd) which begins, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," and that blessing is of the same force and of the same sweetness as this one.

2, 3. *Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways.* And if we walk in God's ways, He will never require us to do anything which is inequitable or unrighteous. No, that life which is made up of walking in God's ways will be full of equity and free from iniquity.

4. *You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.* We are to be as industrious in holiness as grasping men are in business. "You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently," watchfully, carefully, industriously—with all our might.

5. *O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!* The Psalmist is driven to prayer. His admiration of the godly man makes him aspire to be like he and then he feels that he cannot attain to that height without Divine help. So he cries, "O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!"

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your Commandments.* That is a wide expression, "respect unto all Your Commandments." There are many men who are willing to keep a *part* of God's

Commandments, but they must pick and choose for themselves which these shall be. Such are total traitors—there lurks in their heart a distinct rebellion against the Lord, for they really presume to be the judge of God—by taking exception to this or that command in His Law. In their great condescension, they are willing to be obedient in certain points, but not in all. Such men have need to be ashamed! But the Psalmist could say, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your Commandments."

7. *I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned Your righteous judgments.* "I will not praise myself. If I am enabled to be holy, that holiness is Your work, and I will praise You for it."

8. *I will keep Your statutes: O forsake me not utterly.* Whenever you make a resolve, accompany it with a prayer. Let this be your declaration, "I will keep Your statutes." But pray, "O forsake me not utterly," for, otherwise, your resolution will come to nothing. Now begins the second octave of the Psalm

9. *How shall a young man cleanse his way?* The Psalmist has spoken about the holy way. Now he would speak about young men running in it. One of the most intense desires of every godly man is that there may be a succession of godly men. Oh, that our young men might be good men, so that when the old men pass away, the generation following them may be as good as their fathers. No, more—that they may be far better! "How shall a young man cleanse his way?" Within him are strong passions. Around him are fierce temptations—how shall he cleanse his way? There are plenty who would defile him! The youth is compassed about with the temptations of gaiety and the allurements of folly—"How shall a young man cleanse his way?" Here is the answer

9. *By taking heed, thereto, according to Your Word.* There is no keeping a clean way if you walk with your eyes shut! You must pick your path in such a foul road as this—"By taking heed, thereto, according to Your Word." Yes, the greatest heed we can take will not keep us out of the mire unless God's Word is a continual lamp unto our feet and a constant light unto our path. Oh, that every young man here might cleanse his way by taking heed, thereto, according to God's Word!

10. *With my whole heart have I sought You.* Can you, each one, say, "With my whole heart have I sought You"?

10. *O let me not wander from Your Commandments.* "For though I have sought You with my whole heart, yet my heart may in the future go astray. Do not permit it, Lord—do not permit it!" It is a very sorrowful thought to me that there are many who once sat in these seats and resolved to maintain a holy life, who, nevertheless, are, at this moment, in the seat of the scornful—some perhaps in prison, and many of them where they ought not to be. They determined to be right, but, destitute of Divine Grace, they have gone astray. Therefore, let each of us pray, "O let me not wander from Your Commandments." You know what John Bradford used to say when he saw a man taken out to be hanged—"There

goes John Bradford, but for the Grace of God." And when you see others wander, you may say the same about yourself, and then breathe the prayer, "O let me not wander from Your Commandments."

11. *Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.* An old preacher, in a sermon on this text, divided it thus—"The best thing—'Your Word.' In the best place—'have I hid in my heart.' For the best of purposes—'that I might not sin against You.'" He thus gave, in a few words, the very gist of the text.

12. *Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes.* There is a mixture, you see, of prayer and praise. That is the best devotion, which contains a happy combination of these two things, prayer and praise!

13. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth.* I must take leave to claim a special property in this text and there are some among us, here, following that same holy craft of preaching the Divine Word, who can, each one, lay his hand upon his heart and say to God, "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth." This is a happy occupation. If you cannot spend all your lives in it, because of other duties, yet, at least in your own family, and as often as you have opportunities, use your lips in God's service!

14. *I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.* Not only as much as in riches, but as in *all* riches. David had gathered together a vast sum of money for the building of the House of the Lord, but whatever joy he had in those accumulations (and I daresay he had great gladness when he thought of the purpose to which all would be used) yet, nevertheless, he says, "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches."

15. *I will meditate in Your precepts, and have respect unto Your ways.* Blessed meditation! The lack of meditation is one of the faults of the days in which we live—we are so very busy that we have not time to study God's Word—but the Psalmist said, "I will meditate in Your precepts." That is the secret strength—"and have respect unto Your ways"—that is the public result. If we meditated more, we would live better. God help us so to do!

16. *I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word.* So may each one of us resolve. 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.

FEEDING ON A WHOLE CHRIST
NO. 2407

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY APRIL 7, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY, EVENING, APRIL 3, 1887.

"The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it."
Numbers 9:11, 12.

IN great tenderness God permitted the Passover to be kept a second time, that those who had unavoidably been defiled at the first observance might not be shut out from the memorable and symbolical rite. But, although He altered the *date* of the Passover, He never changed the *form* of it—the Paschal feast was to be the same whenever it was celebrated and by whomever it was observed. Whether one family, or an Israelite who happened to be a stranger and visitor in the house, whoever it might be—kept the Passover—the same regulations were to be carefully followed. From this I gather, learning a lesson from the type, that, whatever may be the experiences through which we come to salvation, Christ is always the same and we must partake of Him in the same way. You who have been so defiled that you have, as it were, to eat of the second Passover, even at the 11th hour, long after others have been feeding on Christ—still there is the same Christ for you as there is for those who come at the right time—who seek the Lord early, and find Him while yet the dew of their youth is upon them.

There is none but Jesus for each one of us! There is no way for this man, peculiar to himself because of his righteous life, and no way for that person, peculiar to himself because of his ungodliness—but for the most moral and the most immoral there is the *same* Savior to be received by the same precious faith! Only by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus are we delivered from wrath and only by feeding upon Christ can our spiritual life be sustained. There are not two gospels, but only one Gospel. There are not two Christ's, but only one Christ! There are not two roads to Heaven but only one road to Heaven. Let us go together to the Cross, view the one great Sacrifice for sin and, by faith, find salvation in Him!

The subject for us to consider at this time will be just this—if we do receive Christ, that reception is beautifully expressed and represented by *feeding* upon Him. So, first, *we are to feed upon Jesus Christ.* The Paschal lamb was to be eaten. Secondly, we are *to receive Christ and feed*

upon Him as a whole Christ—"They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it." Then, thirdly, *we are to receive Christ in union with others*. It is a very blessed thing when our personal reception of Christ, our personal feeding upon Christ, is not a solitary act, but is done in company, as when, of old, a whole household drew near to feed upon the Paschal lamb.

I. First, then, WE ARE TO FEED UPON JESUS CHRIST.

The true reception of Christ is very beautifully expressed by our feeding upon Him. The point a sinner longs to know, when he is really awakened and his conscience is thoroughly awakened, is first, this—"How can I be saved? I know that Christ is a Savior, but how can I make Him *my* Savior? I understand that He has provided an Atonement by which sin can be put away—how can that Atonement put *my* sin away?"

When the Paschal lamb was killed in the household of the Israelite, first the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and two side posts by the man who was the head of the household. And as soon as it was sprinkled, its virtue operated at once—that house was secure. Next, they must bring in this lamb which had been roasted with fire, they must gather around the table and all they had to do with it was to eat it. Now, eating is such a simple operation that I cannot explain it. I suppose that the best way of explaining how to eat would be by eating—and the best way of explaining how Christ is to be received is to receive Him! Yet, since I am seeking to help some poor troubled one, I must try, if I can, to explain what it was to eat the Paschal lamb and what it is to receive Christ. I say again, eating the Paschal lamb was a very simple process. Moses might have said to a Jew, "That lamb, roast with fire, is yours if you will eat it. There is no ceremony to be gone through, no incantation to be repeated, no genuflection to be performed. You stand at the table, you eat the lamb, and it is yours."

Now, concerning feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the first thing to be done is *to receive Him by faith*. Receiving is the first part of eating. You are hungry, bread is set before you. You put the bread into your mouth, you receive it and it becomes yours. So receive the Lord Jesus Christ—faith is the mouth by which He is to be received. Believe Him—believe what is testified concerning Him in the Word of God. Say to yourself, "This record is true, Jesus is the Son of God. He came into the world as Man, He lived a holy life. He died a sacrificial death—'the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.' I believe all this. I accept it as true, as true to *me*, and I take it, not into my ears only as hearing it, but into my heart as believing it to be assuredly the Truth of God whereby, alone, souls can be saved."

"But suppose I take Him and have no right to Him." Ah, if you once take Him, you have Him, right or no right! Have I not often told you that if you have eaten a piece of bread, though you had no right to it, it will puzzle all the lawyers in the world to get it away from you? Possession, in such a case as that, is more than the proverbial nine points of the law!

Yes, it is *all* the points of the law, and if you take Christ as yours, then you have Christ as yours! Oh, that you would grasp Him right now! "Well, but suppose it is not right for me to have Christ?" It was never wrong for a poor sinner to take Christ, so have Him now! If He is near you, seize Him now! "Lay hold on eternal life," says the Apostle, and if you lay hold on Christ, God will never cry, "Hands off!" Be boldly daring for once and you shall not find yourself repulsed. The door of mercy is open, enter—and if you are repulsed—you will be the first that was ever rejected by Christ, whoever you may be! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

"I have done that," says one. I am very glad if you have, but have you *really* done it? There is a way of believing and yet not truly believing. A man believes that such and such a thing is true—at least, he says that he does—and yet he may act in such a way as shall prove that he does *not* believe it. You are in your house, in bed and asleep. Someone wakes you up by crying out that your house is on fire—and you calmly turn over and go to sleep, again. I know, by your action, that you could not have believed the report that was brought to you! One looks you in the face and tells you that he can see, there, traces of a deadly disease, and that, within a short time, you will be dead unless you take a certain medicine. Do you tell me you believe that disease to be upon you and believe that medicine would heal you if you took it—and after telling me that—do you go home and think no more of it? Then I know that you have *not* spoken truly in saying that you believe, for true believing would move you to *action*—you would be seriously affected by these things if you believed them to be true.

Come, then, let me ask you a question. Is sin a reality to you? Do you accept the sinner's position and confess that you need a Savior? Do you believe that the Son of God has appeared in human form on purpose that He might save such as you are? Can you advance one step further and say, "I believe in Christ as *my* Savior"? So far so good—the bread is in your mouth!

In eating, the next thing is that the food should undergo a process of digestion. It must lie in the body and be dissolved. So, in order to a full reception of Christ, there must be somewhat of *digestion by meditation*. The great Truths of God I have mentioned enter the soul—they are turned over in the heart and mind by meditation. We think of them, ponder them, consider them—they begin to influence us and our mind sets to work upon those Truths, pressing the very juice and essence out of them—making us to know their secret virtues and powers. O Sirs, there are some of you who will never be saved by Christ because you will not *think*! Unless the Lord Jesus should graciously meet with you and, all of a sudden, you should be caused to believe on Him—which I pray may be the case—I am afraid that you will certainly be lost!

Some of you are not in a condition to get any good out of hearing the Gospel because you do not think of what you hear. You do not lay up in

your hearts and turn over in your minds what is taught you on the Sabbath. Many let the Gospel have a clear thoroughfare, for they allow it to go in one ear and out the other and so, Sunday after Sunday, week after week, month after month, year after year, with them it is only hearing the Gospel and that is all! The Truth of God has no opportunity to become food to their spirits, for what they seem to take in, one minute, they cast out the next—and this is not feeding at all—it is but folly and mockery!

Well now, after food has entered the body and has been digested, there is a further process. I am not going into any physiological discussions, but there is, as you know, the process that is called assimilation. Certain vessels within the body perform their various functions and so, gradually, the food which has been taken is made to nourish the body and build it up. Thus the bread, which, a little while ago, was separate from me, becomes inseparable from me—it has been taken up into my system and has become part and parcel of myself. This is the best form of feeding upon Christ when, having believed the Truth about Him, and having thought it over till we have digested it, certain secret faculties within our nature take Him up and *assimilate Him into our spiritual life*.

Look, Sirs, I believe that Christ was the Incarnate Son of God. I do not merely believe that as a mere matter of fact, as I might believe that there is such a person as the Czar of Russia, but I look to be saved by Him who became Man in order that He might save me! Look further. I believe that this God Incarnate did bear my sins in His own body on the Cross. I look to be forgiven—no, I know that I *am* forgiven—because He took my sin away and ended it so far as I am concerned. That is assimilating the great Truth of God of the Atonement in the inmost part of my spirit. I do not need to explain the process any longer—I want you to put it into practice. Now, Beloved, you who have often fed upon Christ, feed on Him, again, at this moment! Think of Him as you know Him and try to know more of Him! But what you do know of Him, grasp it. Press out of these clusters their sacred juice. Draw out of these Truths the Divine support which they are intended to give to your spirit. Say, "These Truths of God are mine. I live on them, I could die on them, I need nothing better."

If you really thus feed upon Christ, it will come to this—that Christ and you will be one—and none shall be able to separate you from Him, or to take Him from you. As the bread or the meat that you may eat becomes one with yourself, so will Christ, absorbed into your inmost heart by a childlike trust, become vitally and everlastingly part and parcel of your own self! And, because He lives, you must also live, for He has made you to live and He lives in you!

I am sure that if you have once learned to feed upon Christ in the way I have been describing, you will not object to the "bitter herbs" that were to be eaten with the Passover. Oh, no! Those bitter herbs seem to give a zest to the feast. I thought to myself, when I was trying to get into the soul of this text, "I have my dish of bitter herbs every day." They come to

me in this form—Christian ministers, whom I have educated, forsaking the faith. Christian people, who I thought were converted, behaving in an unseemly and ungodly manner. And anxieties about many who do not seem to have so much care about their own souls as I have concerning them. O Christ, my blessed Master, Your service is very sweet because of You, but, in itself, woe is me that ever I was born to it! But the regulation is, "With bitter herbs shall you eat it," therefore, let us go on with our work and take whatever of bitterness accompanies our service. Perhaps some of you get sneered at for your religion—that is your dish of bitter herbs. Or it may be that you are very poor, or, possibly, the more you know of Christ, the more you also know of your own unworthiness, and that knowledge is like eating bitter herbs. Very well, thank God that you have Christ, and say nothing about the hitter herbs—for if the Israelite who is hungry gets a Paschal lamb to feed upon, he may well be content to take the bitter herbs with it.

The Israelites were also to eat the Passover "with unleavened bread." Leavened bread is usually considered by our poor fallen nature to be more agreeable to our taste, and there is a measure of self-denial implied in the putting away of the leaven. Well, we are called to deny ourselves for Christ's sake and we would put away all forms of sin—everything that is leavened—that we may have our all in Him and find everything that delights the palate and charms the spirit in Christ alone! Yes, take away your leavened bread with all its sweetness, and bring in the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread, instead—we will be perfectly satisfied so long as the true Paschal Lamb is upon the table and our souls may feed upon Him!

I will say no more on this first part of my subject, but I pray you, in the silence of your spirits, to feed upon Christ Jesus.

II. This brings me to my second point, which is that WE ARE TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS A WHOLE. The Lord said, concerning the Passover, "They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it." If we receive Christ, we must receive Him as a whole.

We must receive Christ *in the entirety of His Person*. There was Arias—he would receive Christ as a good man, but not as God. But you cannot have Christ at all unless you have Him as a *whole*. There were some who took the opposite side and were willing to receive Christ as God, but not as a bleeding, suffering Man. But you cannot receive Christ at all if you will not have Him altogether—you must have Him in the entirety of His Person—as God *and* Man, or else you cannot have Him at all, and cannot enjoy Him as the food of your soul.

We must also receive Christ *in the entirety of His offices*. He has come to be a Prophet, Priest and King. Be willing to be instructed by Him, to be cleansed by Him, to be ruled by Him—and mark you, you cannot have the Priest unless you will also have the Prophet, nor can He be your Prophet unless He also becomes your King! A whole Christ in undivided honor, accepted as being all that He professes to be—you must have Him

so or not at all! And you must have a whole Christ as to His work. He comes to put away your sin by the shedding of His blood and you say, "I will have Him." But listen, He comes to take away your sinfulness, and make you holy by the water which flowed with the blood from His side. You cannot take justification and omit *sanctification*—you must have both or neither! The Law concerning the Passover was, "They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it." You must have Christ as He is set forth in His Word in all parts of His saving work.

And we must have Christ *in all His teachings*. It will not do for us to say, "I shall believe Christ when He speaks in His Sermon on the Mount and teaches us the ethics of ordinary life. But I will not believe Him when He opens up the mysteries of His love as He addresses His disciples on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane." You cannot have Him at all unless you are willing to believe *all* that He taught as far as you know it, and to believe that what He spoke must be true, even though, as yet, you do not know it. You must take the Lord Jesus Christ to be absolutely Infallible to you—otherwise you cannot receive Him at all.

You must also take Christ *in all His warnings*. You must not turn your back when He says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," and think His language too severe. They who object to one word of Christ have really objected to Christ, Himself! As one leak will sink a boat, so will one objection to Christ destroy your loyal confidence in Him. No, take *every* Word He says and believe it! Hang your soul upon it, knowing that it must be true since the Christ has said it. You must leave nothing of this blessed Paschal Lamb—you must break no bone of Him!

So must it be as to Christ *in all His commands*. It is ours not to reason why, but ours to do what He bids us! And we must not say, "This is essential and that is non-essential." We must not say, "I will do this which He bids me, but I will not do that which He bids me." You are not disciples, but rebels, if you act so! You are not His friends, but His enemies, if you thus pick and choose which of His commands you will obey! How can he be a good soldier who will *sometimes* obey his captain, but will sometimes disobey? Such discipline as that, or rather, such lack of discipline, could be tolerated in no host, and it will not be endured in the armies of the living God! No, you must take a whole Christ in all His commands.

And it must be just the same as to *Christ and His spirit*. One says, "Christ is very loving and I will be loving, too." You are right in saying so, my Brother, but the Christ was very outspoken and very *uncompromising*—will you also be outspoken and uncompromising? If not, your loving spirit will go for little, for it will only be a kind of pandering to worldliness. The spirit of Christ is a perfect spirit and he that has it not is none of His! It is not for us to select one quality of His spirit and say, "I will imitate that." No, but as the Christ acted at all times, so do you act. As far as you are capable of following Him, put your feet down where He puts His feet down. Do what He did according to your measure and de-

gree. A whole Christ fully and faithfully imitated can alone produce a perfect character!

Well now, beloved Friends, you see what our orders are, here. We are, first, to feed upon Christ and then, next, we are to receive Him as a whole. But I regret that there are some persons who do not feed upon a whole Christ. Some, alas, will not do so through sheer willfulness. They will pick and choose and thus show their self-conceit and their rebellion. Do not do so! Do not do so, I beseech you, but feed on the whole Christ as the Israelites ate the whole of the Paschal lamb. Some are unable through ignorance to feed on a whole Christ. They do not know Him, or they would gladly receive Him. Let not ignorance hinder any of you from partaking of the sweetest things on the table of God's Grace—but say to yourself, "Little as I know, I feel that, if I knew more, I would only wish to know what Jesus would teach me. And I yield myself up to Him implicitly, even as a blind man yields himself up to his guide, and I say to Jesus, "What I know not, teach me.'" In that way you will at least be willing to eat the whole Paschal Lamb, even though, through ignorance, you do not fully understand what it is to receive Him.

There are some who, through timidity, fail to feed upon a whole Christ. They are afraid to take in some of the glorious doctrines which He teaches, some of the sweet things of His Everlasting Covenant, some of the strong meat of His eternal purposes, some of the fat things full of marrow, and the wine upon the lees, well refined. I pray you, shrink not back, but, since Christ gives Himself wholly to all His people, if there is a precious Covenant Word, feed upon it! If there is a rich promise, believe it and enjoy it! Christ denies nothing to His beloved. If you really come to His table and desire to have all that there is in Him, then take it, and be not afraid! He will never chide you. Therefore, come freely to Christ, Beloved. He, Himself, has given the invitation—"Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." Take all of Christ into your soul according to your capacity, till you are filled with Him—come joyfully and partake cheerfully of all that He freely gives to you—and be not afraid.

I think that I need not say more than that upon this second point. Only I would to God that many here were willing to say, "I will have a whole Christ." If you are willing to have Him, He is yours! If you will but trust Him, He is yours! There is nothing for you to do but to take Him as your hope, to take your supper tonight. Receive Him into yourself to be the food of your spirit and He is yours forever!

III. I must say only just a few sentences on the last point. WE ARE TO RECEIVE CHRIST IN UNION WITH OTHERS.

The Passover was not a solitary meal. A man did not shut himself up and have the lamb roasted and set on the table, and try to eat it all himself. No, it was a *family* meal—all who were in the house, of the seed of Israel, master and servants, husband and wife and children—all came to that table and fed together. Oh, I like to enjoy Christ for myself, but if I may not speak for others, I will speak for myself, and I must say that I

always enjoy the things of God better with you than I do alone. There is so much zest about having friends to enjoy Christ with us. We can feast upon Him alone, blessed be His name—we know the sweetness of solitary fellowship with Christ—but we love, still more, to share the blessing with other Christians. I have no wish to go all the way to the Celestial City alone! I would much rather go with Christiana and Mercy, and all those little ones—the whole family of pilgrims—and Mr. Greatheart, and all the rest of them! They had such cheery talks together and when they met the giants, if one was a little cast down, another brightened him up and encouraged him to play the man.

What a fine thing it was for such a poor creature as Mr. Ready-to-Halt, who always went on his crutches, and for poor Little-Faith, and Mr. Despondency, and Miss Much Afraid, to get into such good company! It would have been a dreary journey to them if they had gone all the way to the Celestial City, each one, alone! But when they traveled in such good society, you know, they grew merry. You remember that they were so jubilant when Giant Despair's head was cut off that Mr. Ready-to-Halt, though he had never done such a thing before, danced without his crutches! It is wonderful what joy comes out of Christian communion and holy fellowship! So it is good that you eat the Passover together, and not alone. It is well that you rejoice in Christ in the company of others who are rejoicing in Him.

The first with whom we should receive Christ is our own family. Well, then, my Brother, what about the members of *your* family? Are they all converted yet? Are they all saved? If not, breathe a prayer that the Lord would bring the rest of them to the Paschal feast. Some of you will have to go away, directly, when we remain for the communion. Some of you husbands must leave your wives, here, and you will have to go home, or go sit up in the gallery among the spectators. Remember that there will be no spectators in Heaven! And in that last dividing day, it will be an awful thing to be separated eternally from those we love. Happiest will it be in Heaven, itself, if we shall all meet there—an unbroken family!

Still, when the Jew met with his family and ate the Paschal supper, that was not the greatest joy of it, for he recollected that everywhere else, wherever there was an Israelite family, they were all doing the same, and that *the whole of the chosen people of God* were one in keeping this commemorative feast! So are all the people of God one in Christ Jesus. I like to think that I have fellowship with all the saints. I do not object to have fellowship with those who differ from me in many respects. I think that there is a communion of saints that cannot be limited. If there is the Life of God in you, and there is the Life of God in me, you may be mistaken and I may be mistaken upon some points, but the one Life in us will make us have communion with Jesus!

Perhaps you do not obey all Christ's commands and I say to you, "Well, then, I will not commune with you." But I cannot help having communion with you if you are in the body of Christ! Communion is the

pulse of the body and unless I cut my finger off, I cannot help having fellowship with my finger! It may be very dirty. I may tie a bit of red tape round it and say, "There, I will cut you off from fellowship with the rest of my body," but it is no use. As long as the body lives, and the finger lives, the fellowship must be there—the life-blood must continue to flow through it! So, dear Brothers and Sisters, we see many saints of God, many whom we believe to be the children of God, who, no doubt, are mistaken, and have many faults—and who is there who is not mistaken and is without fault?—but if the life of God is in them, there is a fellowship beyond all rules and regulations! That is the fellowship of the life which is in the Head of the Church! It pulses through all the members and must do so evermore.

I hope to come to the Communion Table, tonight, then, enjoying fellowship with *all* the redeemed of the Lord, both on earth and in Heaven! Yes, and with those that have gone from earth hundreds of years ago and, by faith, also to enjoy something of fellowship even with generations yet unborn that, in the fullness of time, shall come to know the Lord.

Thank God, many of us do know what it is to commune with Christ as well as to commune with His people! Both as individuals and as a worshipping assembly, we have often proved the sweetness of fellowship with our Lord. Sometimes, at that Communion Table, He has been set forth manifestly crucified among us. Sometimes, on our bed at night, He has spoken with us. I have known what it is to sit up and try not to go to sleep lest I should lose the overflowing joy of His Divine Presence. I have been afraid, sometimes, to rise from my bed in the morning lest, in going downstairs, I should break the spell of conscious fellowship with Him! Our Lord Jesus is so near His people and there are times when we have such rapt communion with Him that we can truly say that it is eternal life! Then do we sing—

"I stand upon the mount of God,
With sunlight in my soul.
I hear the storms in vales beneath,
I hear the thunders roll!
But I am calm with You, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies
And to the heights on which I stand,
Nor storms nor clouds can rise.
Oh, this is life! Oh, this is joy,
My God, to find You so!
Your face to see, Your voice to hear,
And all Your love to know."

God grant us more of that blessed fellowship, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NUMBERS 9.

Verses 1, 2. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season.* I should almost fear that they had omitted the keeping of the Passover for a year. There was a first celebration of it when they came out of Egypt, but then it was not so much a type as a matter of fact—it was the thing itself—not the remembrance of the coming out of Egypt, but the actual coming out, the exodus. One would gather from this command of the Lord that, on the first anniversary of that memorable season, the children of Israel had omitted its observance and, therefore, Jehovah said to Moses, "Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season." If this conjecture is correct, it is very significant that a rite which belonged to the Law of God and was, therefore, to pass away, was so soon neglected—and certainly it was afterwards neglected for many, many years. Whereas, the great memorial ordinance of the Christian dispensation—the Lord's Supper—was not neglected even when Christians were under fierce persecution from the Jews or other nations. When the observance of that rite among the heathen was pretty sure to bring death, yet Christians met together on the first day of the week and continually broke bread in remembrance of their Lord's death, even as we do to this day. I suppose that the Supper, which is the memorial of Christ our Passover, has never been altogether neglected throughout the world, but has been a matter of constant observation in the Church of Christ and shall be "till He come."

3-7. *in the fourteenth day of this month, at even, you shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall you keep it. And Moses spoke unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. And there were certain seen, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: and those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: therefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?* They were in a great difficulty. They were commanded to come to the Passover—they sinned if they did not come—but they had defiled themselves, either through accident or of necessity. And if they came, thus, to the Passover, they would be committing sin, so that either way they were in an ill case. There must be somebody to bury the dead. I suppose that these persons had fulfilled that necessary office, and there had not been time for them to purge themselves from the ceremonial defilement involved in the touching of the dead—so what were they to do?

8. *And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you.* Oh, how wisely we would give advice

if we would never decide till we had prayed about the matter! Possibly we think ourselves so experienced and so well acquainted with the mind of God, that we can answer off-hand. Or, perhaps, we think that we need not consult the Lord at all, but that our own opinion will be a sufficient guide. Moses was greater and wiser than we are—he said to these men—"Stand still, and I will hear what Jehovah will command concerning you."

9-12. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.* So that provision was made for the holding of a second Passover, that persons who were defiled at the first observance might have the opportunity to keep the feast a month afterwards.

13. *But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and does not keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.* What a solemn sentence that is! Let me read it apart from its context—"Because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin." You see, the great offering of the Lord, the atoning Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only way by which sin can be put away! And if any man will not bring that—in other words, if he will not believe in Jesus—then here is his certain doom, "that man shall bear his sin." No more terrible judgment can be pronounced upon any one of us than this, "that man shall bear his sin." "If you believe not that I am He," said Christ, "you shall die in your sins."

14. *And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the LORD; according to the ordinance of the Passover, and adoring to the manner thereof, so shall he do. You shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.* Now comes another subject—

15, 16. *And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony and at even there was upon the tabernacle, as it were, the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.* This was the sign of the Presence of God in the midst of that vast canvas city! I suppose that the great cloud rose up from the most holy place and probably covered the whole camp of the tribes, so that it shielded them from the fierceness of the sun, while at night the entire region was lit up by this marvelous illumination! The chosen nation had the pillar of cloud by day for a shelter, and the pillar of fire by night for a light. God's Presence acts upon us in much the same way as the cloudy fiery pillar acted upon Israel—

"He has been my joy in woe,
Cheered my heart when it was low
And, with warnings softly sad,
Calmed my heart when it was glad."

We get shelter from the fierce heat of the world's day and deliverance, also, from the darkness of the world's night through our Lord's gracious Presence!

17-20. *And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the LORD, the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched. As long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD, they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed.* Happy people to be thus Divinely guided! They could never tell when they would have to be on the move. They had no abiding city. When their tents were pitched and they were just getting comfortably settled, perhaps that very morning the pillar of cloud moved and, at other times, when they desired to be marching, it stood still. They could never be certain of staying long in any one place. It is just so with you and with me—our Lord intends to keep us with a loose hold on all things here below. We cannot tell what changes may come to any one of us and, therefore, reckon on nothing that God has not plainly promised. Be certain of nothing but uncertainty and always expect the unexpected! You cannot tell between here and Heaven where your Guide may take you—happy will you be if you can truly say that you desire to always follow where the Lord leads.

21-23. *And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed. Whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents and journeyed not but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.* So may each one of us ever be Divinely guided!—

"Let the fiery cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through."

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.

CHRIST THE CURE FOR TROUBLED HEARTS
NO. 2408

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 14, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 10, 1887.

"And He said unto them, Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts."
Luke 24:38.

IT seems, from these questions of our Lord, that true Believers may come into a troubled state of mind. The eleven were truly Christ's disciples and even His Apostles, yet, when their faith failed them and they refused to believe the testimony that Christ was risen from the dead, they were troubled in their minds and tossed to and fro, as on a stormy sea. Unbelief is a great troubler. Our peace comes to us by faith and if our faith grows weak, our peace of mind is apt to decline and we are likely to become much disturbed in spirit. If those who are Believers, who have passed from death unto life, are sometimes troubled, you may be sure that others are! It is no wonder that they are troubled who have never experienced the Grace of God in conversion and have never felt the joy which Jesus brings to those whom He saves. If every unconverted man could see his true state, he would not dare to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, until he had been brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ. If you who are living without a Savior realized your lost condition, your pillows would be stuffed with thorns instead of with feathers. I scarcely think that your bread would be sweet to your taste, or that light would be pleasant to your eyes, if you really knew your present condition and the jeopardy in which your souls are found. I tremble for you and I shall be glad if you learn to tremble for yourselves—and to flee from the wrath to come!

I want, at this time, to speak more particularly to some who are, in a measure, awakened and awakened to their real position before God, and have been so for a long while. They are not happy. They never will be happy until a very great change comes over them, yet I do not see why they should not, at once, have done with doubts, fears and troubled thoughts, and enter immediately into rest and peace. I say that I do not see why they should not receive this great blessing, but I see a great many reasons why they should! I can truly say that when I preach to you, I labor with all my heart and soul to bring you to the Cross of Christ. And I have sometimes thought, when I am going home, "That was a poor sermon if it is judged merely by the rules of rhetoric, yet it was such a sermon that if I could have heard it, myself, when I was in de-

spair—when I was longing for salvation—it would have been worth a Jew's eye to me, for it would have been the very thing I needed to show me the road to Heaven. It would have been a key to unlock my dungeon door and to set me at liberty."

And I am praying that it may be so now—every word I speak is steeped in prayer that some of my truly anxious hearers, who would be right if they could, may now end their wanderings at the Cross—have done with their uneasiness and restlessness—and find peace in Jesus Christ the Savior! So, with that objective in view, I am going to take the question out of its context and, though Jesus put it to His eleven Apostles, I shall venture to address it to you who are very far from being Apostles—who are not yet even *disciples*, but who, at least, *wish* that you were numbered, even, among the least of God's people! To you I say, in the words of the text, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

I. And, first, THIS QUESTION IS WORTH CONSIDERING—"Why are you troubled?"

Many of you are troubled. Some of you are very greatly troubled, though not always to the same extent. You shake off your anxiety, sometimes. Unhappy men that you are, that you should be able to shake off a trouble which is driving you to the Savior! You get out into company. You become immersed in business and you forget this great sorrow, this sad perplexity. But, after a while, it comes back to you. A little sickness, or a death in the family, or even the east wind and the fogs, with the dullness that often accompanies them, will bring back to you those sorrowful thoughts and you are again troubled!

And you have many questions in your heart—you cannot get rid of them. It has been so with you for mouths! I know some with whom it has been so for *years*—they have been attending my ministry, perhaps, or the ministry of some other preacher of the Word, and, after a sermon which has been pressing and personal, they feel dreadfully uneasy. They cannot tell what to make of themselves and, sometimes, they have said, "This state of things must come to an end. We cannot any longer endure to have this indefinable something, this mysterious fear which haunts us, and takes away the very joy of life."

It will be a good thing to ask this question, "Why are we so troubled?" because *it would be a great pity to be troubled for nothing*. If there is no cause for the anxiety, let us get rid of it! Count it one of the wisest actions to *battle* with despondency. I do not suppose there is any man in this place who is naturally more inclined to despondency than I am, but when I feel this pressure upon my spirit, I seek to overcome it by hoping in God. I say to myself, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." When I press the question home and find that there is nothing, really, to disquiet me, I am not disquieted any longer! And I suppose that you are of much the same make as I am and, if you look your trouble fairly in the face, and you find that there is nothing in it, then you will shake yourself loose from it and come to a cheery state of heart once more!

But suppose that there should be something that *ought* to cause you anxiety—is it not best, at once, to make a full investigation of the matter? *It may be that the cure of the evil lies in the search for it.* Here is a man who is half afraid that he has contracted a disease, but, if so, at present it is only in its early stages. Now, if he is a foolish man, he will say, "I shall not trouble about it. If it gets to be much worse, then I will see to it." But if he is a wise, intelligent man, he says, "I must know the ins and outs of this affair. I will go to the best physician I can find and he shall thoroughly examine me, and I will know what these symptoms mean, for, even if there is disease, perhaps it may be nipped in the bud and my life may yet be saved. If I go to the doctor at once, he may be able to battle with this mischief before it takes a greater hold upon me." I think that he is a very sensible man to say to himself, "Suppose that my health is all wrong? Possibly there is a cure for my malady—I will go and see if I can have this cure."

Remember that the first thing you ought to see to is your *soul.* Sirs, by all means, attend to your health! Look well to the title deeds of your property, make your wills, and so forth, but, first of all, see to the well-being of your immortal nature, for what will you do if you should pass into another world and find yourselves forever shut out from hope? What an awful thing that would be! Therefore, first and foremost, look to that which is to last forever and make your calling and election sure! God help you, by His Grace, to see to this matter this very hour! If there is a cure to be had *anywhere*, there will be no particular reason for fearing and being troubled if we resolve to go and obtain it. If it is, indeed, put within our reach, let us stretch out our hand and take it at once—and so end our troubles and questions in the best manner possible—by getting the cure for our disease, the heal-all for our soul-sickness! The disciples, at the time mentioned in our text, were troubled, because, when Jesus stood in their midst, they supposed that it was a spirit, a ghost—yet it was no ghost, it was the real living Lord Jesus, whom they afterwards handled, who was there, but, "they supposed that they had seen a spirit," and therefore, "they were terrified and frightened."

I wonder whether *your present troubles arise out of a supposition.* I have known some who have said to me, "I am afraid, Sir, and this is my daily trouble, that God has never chosen me to eternal salvation. Suppose that, after all, I should not be one of His elect?" Now, listen—suppose that you *should be* one of His elect? Is there not as much sense in supposing the one thing as the other? And suppose that you were to leave off supposing—that would be a very sensible thing to do! There is not much good that ever comes by indulging suppositions of that kind! Neither you nor I can climb to Heaven and unfold that roll. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God." Leave that secret thing with Him. I will tell you something in which there is *no supposition.* Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Under no supposable circumstance will Jesus Christ ever cast away a sinner who comes to Him! Therefore, kindly leave the supposing alone and just take the certainty that whoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out.

I hear another one say, "But suppose I have committed the unpardonable sin?" To which I answer, "But suppose you have not?" And there is just as much reason for supposing one way as supposing the other. And again I say, suppose you are wise enough to leave off supposing altogether? If you *have* committed the unpardonable sin, I should really like to know what it is, for, after reading, I think, as much of sound divinity as anybody, I have never yet been able to discover what it is! Nor have I ever met with any divine who has even seemed to me to approximate to any sure and certain description of what the unpardonable sin may be. This much I do know about it—it is called a sin that is unto death. And as soon as a man commits it, a *spiritual death* steals over him, so that he *never* desires mercy, *never* is conscious of his guilt and *never* wishes to find salvation by Jesus Christ. He becomes dead! So dead that it is not merely the sin which is, itself, unpardonable, but the *condition of heart* into which it throws the man, so that he never seeks pardon, or even *wishes* for it. Now, my dear Friends, you know that you have not come to that terrible state because *you are always restless about your soul's salvation* and always wishing that by some means you might be saved!

Whatever supposition you bring, I believe that I can sweep your supposition away, or that it deserves to be swept away. Therefore, do not be in doubt or fear because of a supposition. I could bother you with suppositions if I liked to do so. Suppose there were to be an earthquake. Suppose that top gallery were to come tumbling down. Why, I could go on supposing till I had frightened every nervous soul in the place! But what a fool I would be and what fools you would be to be frightened thereby! I pray you, believe me, that there is enough in the black facts of your case to trouble you without your vexing yourself unnecessarily by suppositions! It used to be thought to be a mark of sanctity for a man to wear a hair shirt and an iron belt round his waist which covered him with sores. We know better than that, now! Therefore, why make a hair shirt of suppositions and an iron belt of pure inventions of your own imagination? Get rid of them all, I beseech you!

But suppose that you have done with suppositions, yet *it may be possible that you are troubled with doubts*. "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" You are unable to get peace because you have certain doubts in your hearts. Well, what are your doubts?

"I have been thinking," says one, "perhaps the Bible is not true." Now, when these disciples thought that Jesus, Himself, was not really there, but that it was only a vision, our Savior said to them, "Handle Me, and see." And the best way to prove whether the Bible is true is not to stand and listen to the evil suggestions of skeptics against it, but to hear its own challenge, "Handle Me, and see." There is something wonderfully substantial in the religion of Jesus Christ!

To me, it is life, joy, comfort, strength—everything! I handle it and I have tried and proved it for myself, these many years, but I do not expect my experience to stand in the place of your own experience of it. Go to Christ with prayer, yourself. Go to God with repentance, yourself, and see whether He does not pardon you, bless you, change you and make a new creature of you! And when He has done that, believe me, you will

never again doubt whether the Bible is true, for when it shall have saved you from your fears, rescued you from your sins and brought you into life and light and liberty, you will be absolutely certain that it is true because you have tried and tested it yourself!

"Oh, but I have a different thought from that!" says another friend, "I think that I cannot be saved because I do not feel all that I ought to feel. I have not had sufficient horror of sin. I have not felt myself to be the worst sinner who ever lived. In fact, I do not think I can ever drag myself down to that state of despair which I have read of as the experience of a great many who have been saved." Now that is another of your foolish thoughts which you had better give up thinking! Who told you that you must weep a certain quantity of tears? Who told you that you must feel a certain degree of anguish? That Book has not told you so, nor has God's preacher! But we are continually telling you that the suffering on account of sin was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Atonement for human guilt is in His precious blood and that you may come to Him just as you are! Have we not often tried to draw a line of distinction between repentance, which is the *fruit of the Spirit*, and despair, which is a *temptation of the devil*? Many, no doubt, come to Christ in black despair, but why should you not come with great hopefulness expecting that He will bless you? And if you do so come, depend upon it that He will not send you away empty. Get rid of that foolish thought, I pray you, and believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord. May the Holy Spirit help you to do so!

Perhaps a third troubled one says, "My thought is, Sir, that, if I professed to be a Christian, I should not live up to it." I heard a good reply to that remark from one who came to see me last week. One said to her, "You know, if you make a profession of religion, you must live up to it." "Oh," she answered, "all the profession I make is that I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ—and I put my trust in Him to help me to live up to it—I dare trust Him as far as that." Mind that you do the same and get rid, altogether, of the thought that it is you, by yourself, who has to live up to your profession. Salvation is of the Lord, alone! You have to accept Grace from Christ for nothing and He will delight to give it to you. And He will also delight to continue to give you all the Grace you need till He brings you safely home to Glory!

Our Lord asked His disciples, "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" There are some who say, "*It is the feelings that we have in our heart that causes us anxiety*." Well now, what are your feelings? As a rule, I care much more about *faith* than about feelings, but for once, tell me what your feelings are, you who are troubled and vexed with anxious thoughts.

"Well, Sir," says one, "I am afraid that I shall not be saved." But why not? "Oh, I do not know why, but I am afraid I will not!" Well, do you not think that you are very foolish? If you will think of it a little, you will be sure that you are. Because, when a person says, "I am so fearful," and you ask, "What are you afraid of?" and he says, " Oh, I do not know, but I am so fearful!" you would say to him, "My dear fellow, if you do not know what it is that you fear, then give up being fearful!" If you have nothing to be afraid of, do not be afraid, for what can be the reason of it?

"Oh, but, Sir," says another, "I feel—well, to make short work of it, I feel that it is too good to be true." What is too good to be true? "Why, that I may have my sins forgiven simply upon my believing and may now, at once, become a child of God!" Too good to be true, is it? Well, it would be too good to be true if it came from you—but as it comes from God, nothing is too good to be true of the good and gracious God! He is willing to blot out all your sins if you will but trust to the Lord Jesus Christ. However much you may have transgressed against His Laws, He is prepared to pass an act of amnesty and oblivion and to blot out all your transgressions! Your wanderings, your blasphemies, even, He is ready to forgive—more ready to forgive than you are to be forgiven—and He puts it simply thus, "Believe in My Son. Trust that He whom I have appointed to save you will save you and, upon your so trusting, your transgressions are forgiven and you are saved."

It is a great message that we have to deliver. Would you have a little Gospel from a great God? Would you have a little Gospel from that great Savior who was the Son of God and yet died upon the Cross? If it had been less than it is, you would have begun to quibble about its littleness! But now that it is so great, I pray you, do not quarrel with great mercy, but receive it, believe it, believe it at once and let your doubts and fears end from this time forth, through the effectual working of God's gracious Spirit!

I have lingered too long over this first division, yet I hope I have convinced you that the question is worth considering.

II. The question we have now to consider is this—HAS YOUR TROUBLE ANYTHING TO DO WITH JESUS? This is what our Lord meant by enquiring of His disciples, "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" Their trouble had to do with Jesus, but they had made a great mistake concerning Him.

"Well," you say, "this subject of Jesus and His salvation, it is all a supernatural business." *Do all supernatural matters frighten you*? "Yes, Sir, they do. I am afraid of that which goes beyond the verge of things that can be seen." You will be there, yourself, before long—whether you are afraid of it or not, you will die. As surely as you are in this Tabernacle, you will have to do with that which is supernatural! You may live a considerable time, perhaps, if you are a young man, but it will seem a very short while when you come to the end of it. And then death, Heaven, Hell, angels, God, the Judgement Seat and eternity will have to be dealt with by you! Oh, it would be a great mercy if you could now get to be familiar with these things! Think where you wish to live forever—you had better learn the language of the country! It would be well for you to begin to understand something of the world to come, for come it will, and there is no putting it off. The strongest man in this place will have to die and it is a reflection which often forces itself upon me that poor, weak, sickly people keep on living when you thought that they would have been dead years ago—but your fine, strong, healthy men—these are they of whom we hear, "Such an one died at the railway station." Or, "Such an one was taken all of a sudden, and is gone." Therefore, see to this matter, Sir! See

to it at once! You will have to deal with the supernatural sooner or later, so had you not better begin now?

"Oh," you say, "but *this Lord Jesus Christ, in whom you tell me to trust, seems so unreal*. I cannot see Him and handle Him, as those Apostles did. He is so unreal to me." Yes, so the Apostles thought, you know. They thought that they saw a ghost—yet there is nothing more real in all the world than our Lord Jesus Christ! I wish that you would seek Him tonight. I wish that you would get to that little room of yours and kneel at your bedside, and cry, "Savior, if You are, indeed, a Savior, here is a sinner who longs to be saved! Come and save me." If you do so, you shall soon find that though not gripped with the hands, or seen with the eyes, yet there is no brighter, truer, or more living reality than Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

"But, Sir," you cry, "*this believing seems so vague and indistinct*. If you told me something that I had to *do*, I would try to do it. If I had to go barefoot from here to John O'Groat's House, for instance, I would know what *that* meant and I would start tomorrow morning, or, if necessary tonight." Yes, I daresay you would, but, after all, there is nothing more vague in your being told to believe in Jesus than there would be in bidding you to walk barefoot to John O'Groat's House. To believe in Jesus is a most simple matter, easily understood, even by a child—it is just to trust Him, that is all. To believe that what is written concerning Him is true and then to trust yourself entirely to Him—that will save you. Look, I have thrown my whole weight upon this platform rail. If that should go down, I shall go down. Do just that with the Lord Jesus—throw your whole weight on Him. If He cannot save you, be lost. I must be lost, I am sure, if He cannot save me. My whole and only hope hangs on those dear hands that were nailed to the Cross. My only trust is in that precious blood which flowed from His pierced side. I risk my eternal destiny with Him and feel that there is no risk whatever in doing so! Now, tell me, is that vague? It seems to me to be very distinct and clear.

"Well," says one, "but, somehow, *Christ seems so unapproachable*. I cannot get at Him." Now, that is the last thing that you ought to say, for He will receive you if you breathe only a silent prayer to Him. In the pew down there, sitting on your seat, or standing in the aisle, or away up in the gallery, just speak to Him in your heart and He will hear you in a moment. Unapproachable? Why, beloved Friends, there is nobody so *approachable* as Christ! A wish will reach Him, a tear has already found Him—He is everywhere present wherever there is any heart that longs to obtain salvation through Him!

Then I fancy that I hear one of you say, "*I feel that He is so holy that I, so guilty, cannot come to Him.*" Would you have Him to be unholy, then? If He were so, how could He save you? But, being holy, yet He bids you come to Him. Then why do you not come? Why do you make a barrier out of such a glorious fact as this, that Christ is good, just and true? Remember that this, also, is true, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. If He does not save sinners, then He came into this world to mock us! He came into this world for nothing and if you, being a sinner, will come to Christ and Christ rejects you, He has forgotten His

commission, He has belied His Character! He must give up His name, for He is no longer Jesus if He does not save sinners that come to Him, yes, and if He does not save sinners that do not come to Him, too, for He has come to seek and to save—both to seek and to save—that which was lost.

"But," says yet another, "*I cannot think that the Lord Jesus Christ would take any notice of me*." Oh, that I could nail your wretched, miserable thoughts of my great Lord up on His Cross! "Oh, but I am nobody, Sir!" Christ died for nobodies! "But I am poor." "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." "But I am quite illiterate." Yes, and it is to such that a *plain Gospel* is sent by our gracious Savior. "But I am altogether obscure and unknown." Oh, no, you are not! The Lord Jesus knows all about you! Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not suppose that if you were rich, Christ would think any more of you than He does now! You know how it is among men—if a man wears a good coat and a diamond ring, people give him a seat as soon as he comes into the aisle!

Yes, but that is not the spirit of Jesus Christ! He does not care about your diamond rings and your satin dresses. My Lord Himself wore a smock frock, woven from the top, throughout, a garment without seam. He was dressed as the most plain and humble of peasants dressed, and He delighted to associate with the poorest of the poor. Therefore, do not tell me that He will not condescend to look at you! My Lord would leave off listening to the songs of angels to hear a poor sinner cry! If it were some grand review day in Heaven, when cherubim and mailed seraphim marched before His august eye, He would leave the camp of angels to come and listen to a beggar's prayer, for, remember, He is a Man as truly as He is God, and everything that is human touches that true heart of His that was pierced for men. Therefore, cry to Him, ask Him to have mercy upon you and He will stand still, as He did when blind Bartimaeus cried to Him! And He will command you to be brought before Him—and then He will say to you, "What will you that I should do for you?" And He will give you spiritual sight and spiritual health in answer to your prayer. Come to Him, however poor, weak and insignificant you may be, and you shall soon prove that it is even as I say.

If you have made any mistakes about my Lord and Master, I hope that what I have said may help to remove them.

III. Now, lastly, and may God bless this word to you, dear troubled Friend, to bring you to the Savior! JESUS RIGHTLY KNOWN WILL MEET EVERY TROUBLE OF EVERY SEEKING SOUL.

If you did but know Him, you would find an end to your trouble at once! Those lines are quite true—

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too."

If men did but know what a Savior He is, they would never rest till they had proved Him to be their Savior!

Let me tell you a few things that may help to end all your troubles. First, *Jesus Christ is alive*. He died, but He rose again. He is alive and living among men. Spiritually, He is still on earth. His bodily Presence is in Heaven, but His spiritual Presence is everywhere—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found."

He is alive, active, living, present with us here, giving us His benedictions, working out His Divine projects—a living present force among the myriads of this city—a living present Person in this House of Prayer.

Next, *Jesus Christ lives as One who has made a full Atonement for sin.* Do you know what that means? This is what I understand by Atonement. We were guilty. We had sinned and the Law of God has bound punishment to sin with iron clamps. I am sure that the only way in which the world is to be governed is by this Law of God, that the consequences of evil must be evil. If men will do wrong, they must be punished. With all reverence, we may say that God Himself cannot reverse that Law, for it is a right and proper Law. Well, then, Jesus Christ came and bore the consequences of human sin in His own body on the tree and those who believe in Jesus Christ, by the very act of believing, accept Him to be their Substitute, bearing their guilt and punishment, and being unto God a Sacrifice instead of them. Therefore, as many as have believed in Jesus Christ may know for sure that He died in their place.

I remember talking, one day, to a poor man, an Irishman, and trying to make this point very plain to him. I said, "Now suppose you had committed a murder and you were to be hanged for it." "Yes," he replied, "and I should deserve it." "But suppose I should go to the Queen and say to her, 'I am willing to be hanged, instead of this man. Such is my love for him that, to set him free and yet to honor the law, I will consent to die in his place'? The man said, "That would be very kind of you, Sir." "Well, suppose that the Queen had the ability to consent to it and I could be accepted as your substitute—and I were hanged instead of you—would the policeman take you up for that murder?" "Oh, no!" he exclaimed, "I would say, 'You can't touch me. Why, the gentleman was hanged instead of me! Therefore, I am free."

That is exactly the way of salvation. Jesus Christ suffered in the place of all of you who trust in Him and you are clear before the bar of Divine Justice. Every man who believes in Jesus Christ, that is, *trusts* Him, may know without doubt that Christ was, for him, a certain and effectual Substitute by which his sin was put away on the Cross. "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Now, if you understand that great Truth of God, I think that your doubts and fears ought to come to an end at once.

Remember, also, that *Jesus Christ lives to give repentance and remission of sins.* In this very chapter we read that He bade His Apostles go and preach repentance and remission of sins in His name among all nations! He says to you, "Turn from your sin and I will turn from My anger. Quit your sin and your sin is forgiven. Leave it. Loathe it and I will grant you immediate pardon for the sake of the great atoning Sacrifice." This Truth, also, if it is fully believed, should bring peace and joy to your heart and mind!

Please remember, also, that *the Lord Jesus Christ lives to pray for sinners.* He lives to make intercession for the transgressors! He lives to give to sinners the Holy Spirit to work in them true belief and true repentance! He lives mighty to save, to do for you what you cannot do for your-

self, to bear you up and bear you through, and bring you, at last, to His own right hand!

Brothers and Sisters, as I trust my Lord Jesus Christ, myself, with all my heart, with all my future, my past, my present, with, indeed, *everything,* and as I feel perfect peace in doing so, I would to God that you would do the same, that you might feel the same peace, and get strength within to bear the troubles of this mortal life. Did you ever hear what good John Hyatt, who used to preach to the sailors, said when he was dying? Someone asked him, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust Jesus with your soul, now?" "Trust Jesus with my soul!" he exclaimed, "if I had ten thousand souls, I could trust them all with Him!" We are not ten thousand here, tonight—we are somewhat under that number—but oh, that we might all come and trust our souls with Jesus! Then, in that Last Great Day, with sweet clamor of praise, with united tempests of song, we will bless that dear crucified but now exalted Savior who will not fail one of us, but will bring us to see His face in Glory!

Will you not trust Him tonight? Dear Friend, you might go down those stairs, you know, with a firm foot, saying, "I am a saved man." Yes, out of this area many a troubled heart may make its way and go home with all the bells ringing out sweet hallelujahs—"I have believed! I am forgiven! I am the chief of sinners, but I am forgiven, for I have trusted where God bids me trust. And now, because I am forgiven and am a child of God, I will live a new life, and I will serve the Lord with all my heart."

You good soldiers who are here, tonight, I hope you are already good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But if you are not, I would like to be the recruiting sergeant and enlist you beneath the standard of the Cross. Only trust my Lord and you shall be saved in the day of battle, and saved in the hour of death—yes, and saved amidst the temptations of this wicked city. He shall cover you! He, Himself, shall cover you and you shall be perfectly safe beneath that Divine Shelter! Who will trust Christ and be saved? Lord, give us many souls, tonight, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 16:1-14; LUKE 24:32-44.

Mark 16:1, 2. *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.* Their love made them prompt. Their affection was about to attempt a needless and, indeed, impossible thing. Yet I do not doubt that it was acceptable before God. Oh, that we had such love that even the dead body of the Christ should be so dear to us that we would be ready, at great expense, to anoint it! I fear that, nowadays, even His living Word is not valued as it should be. How few, therefore, should we be likely to find who would have cared for His *dead* body? These holy women had had cause enough to love their Lord and they showed that their hearts were full of affection for Him even after He had been taken from them.

3. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?* A question that has puzzled many other people concerning many other things perplexed these holy women, yet there was no reason for the question to be raised at all. Perhaps some of you are, at this time, distressed when there is no cause for distress, and in fear where no fear is. It was so with these women who said, one to another, "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?"

4. *And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.* And, therefore, hard to roll away and, therefore, the more easily seen when it was rolled away! And, therefore, the greater cause for joy that it was rolled away! In the greatness of our troubles there may often be space for the greater display of the goodness of God! A great trial may be nothing more than the prelude of a great joy. Do not dread the foaming billows, for they may wash you ashore—it is the worst that they can do—and it is also the best. The stone at the door of the sepulcher was very great, but it was rolled away, so that it mattered not to the women how great it was.

5. *And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened.* An angel had been allowed to assume the appearance of a man—that usually seems to be the way in which angels appear to men. I suppose there is, after all, a great kinship between angels and men, otherwise angelic beings would not so constantly assume that form when they appear to men. At the sight of the young man clothed in a long white garment, these good women were frightened.

6, 7. *And he said to them, Be not frightened: You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you.* Make sure, Beloved, that you know the Truth of God for yourselves and then hasten to tell it to others. I pray you, run not without knowing what your errand is to be, but I also pray you, when you have an errand for the Lord, do not tarry, but, "Go your way, tell His disciples." It was very thoughtful of this angel to say, "and Peter," thus linking with the disciples the name of him who had most glaringly transgressed and denied his Master,

8. *And they went out quickly and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid.* But, after this, they summoned up courage and did tell the story of their Lord's resurrection.

9-13. *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the rest: neither believed they them.* Unbelief is very hard to kill, even in hearts that are right with God. So we need not wonder

that Divine Grace is required to expel unbelief from the hearts of the unregenerate!

14. *Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.* The story of our Lord's appearance to the disciples is more fully told by Luke in the 24th Chapter of his Gospel, to which let us turn.

Luke 24:32-35. *And they said, one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with as by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.* These were the two disciples who had recognized their Lord in the breaking of bread, though they did not know Him during their walk with Him to Emmaus.

36. *And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.* This was the common Jewish salutation, but, from then on it would be sanctified most Divinely and it would be a Christian greeting to say, "Peace be unto you."

37-44. *But they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see; far a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me.* Notice the seals which our Lord continually set upon the Old Testament, the manner in which He always treated the Scripture, the reverent way in which He confessed its Infallibility—and His determination that in every item, every jot and tittle—it should be fulfilled by Himself. This was often manifested before His death and, on His return from the grave, He had not changed His mind! He here speaks of the three great parts into which the Old Testament was divided by the Jews and He expressly sets the seal of His royal assent upon "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." May we, in like manner, prize the whole Inspired Word!

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 GREAT SERMON BY THE GREATEST PREACHER
NO. 2409

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 21, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING APRIL 17, 1887.

"And lo, a voice came from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
Matthew 3:17.

A CERTAIN divine, who had taken this verse as his text, spoke upon it under these three heads. "First," he said, "here is a great pulpit—the voice was from Heaven. Secondly, here is a great Preacher—it was the Father who spoke as only God can speak. And, thirdly, here is a great sermon—'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

I do not think that I could arrange my thoughts better than under these three divisions, that is to say, if I intended to preach at any length from the whole passage that I have taken as my text. It is from Heaven that this voice comes. It is the voice of the Father, Himself, that speaks. And what the voice says is worthy to be treasured in the hearts of us all. "This—this Man who has just come up dripping from the River Jordan, upon whom the Spirit, like a dove, descended and rested—this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But, on this occasion I am going to say, first, that *the Father was well pleased with Christ*. Secondly, I want to ask the question, *are we well pleased with Him*? And then to answer, on behalf of many of you, "Yes, that we are! For we also can say of the Lord Jesus that with Him we are, indeed, well pleased."

I. The first division is in the text itself—THE FATHER WAS WELL PLEASED WITH HIS BELOVED SON.

I find that the translation would be even more accurate if the passage read, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I *was* well pleased." Let us begin, then, with that thought—*the Father had been well pleased with His Son*. The past, rather than the present, though not to the exclusion of the present, seems to be intended in the Greek word here used—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I *was* well pleased." That is to say, "Before He was born here among men, before His first infant cry was heard at Bethlehem, before He was obedient to His parents at Nazareth, before He toiled in the carpenter's shop, before He had reached the prime of His Manhood and was able to come forth and to be dedicated to His sacred ministry in the waters of Baptism—before that—I was well pleased with Him."

Yes, and we must go further back than that, for He "was" before He was here! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." In those far-distant ages when the worlds were made, when matter and mind were spoken into existence by the creative Word of God, the Father took counsel with His beloved and equal Son—Jesus Christ as well as the Father was Infinite Wisdom—He balanced the clouds, weighed the hills, appointed the throbs of the tide and kindled the light of the sun! He was the Father's Well-Beloved before the earth was! Yes, and in those primeval days, when as yet there was nothing but God—if your imagination can get back to the time when our great sun and the moon and stars slept in the mind of God like unborn forests in an acorn cup—in that eternity when there was no time, no day, no space, nor anything but God, the All-in-All, you will realize that even *then* the Only-Begotten was with the Father and in Him the Father was well pleased, for as God is eternal in His being, He is eternal in the trinity of His Person! The Triune Jehovah is the theme of praise both on earth and in Heaven! As we have often sung—

"Holy, Holy, Holy Thee,
One Jehovah evermore,
Father, Son, and Spirit! We,
Dust and ashes, would adore!
Lightly by the world esteemed,
From that world by You redeemed,
Sing we here, with glad accord,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord!
Holy, Holy, Holy! All
Heaven's triumphant choir shall sing
When the ransomed nations fall
At the footstool of their King!
Then shall saints and seraphim,
Harps and voices, swell one hymn,
Round the throne with full accord,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord."

We cannot fully comprehend the great doctrine of the Divine Filiation and the less we pry into it, the better. But certain it is that the Sonship of Christ does not imply any second position in order of time. As the Father was always the Father, so the Son was always the Son. Before all worlds and time, itself, He was with the Father, co-equal and co-eternal with Him. Now, dear Friends, a love which has endured forever—which, even now, is eternal—since it had no beginning and can have no end, this is a mighty love, indeed! And it helps to make us wonder all the more that God should so love the world as to give His only-begotten Son, freighted with such love as this, to come down here and live, and die, that He might save a guilty race that had only just begun—an infant race of a few thousand years. It will forever be a marvel that the Father would have been willing to sacrifice the Eternal and Ever-Blessed for the sake of such worthless creatures as these! Let your minds and hearts adoringly dwell, then, on that first view of the text, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I was well pleased."

Now read it, "The Father is well pleased with the Lord Jesus Christ always." The, "I am," of our version, containing, as it does, within itself the,

"I was," of the original, implies perpetuity and continuity. *God the Father is always pleased with His beloved Son.* There was never a time when He was otherwise than pleased with Him! Yes, He was pleased with Him even in Gethsemane, when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He was pleased with Him when He gave Him up to be nailed to the Cross of Calvary, for, though it pleased the Father to prove Him, and He did, for a while, hide His face from Him because of the necessary purposes of His atoning Sacrifice, yet He always loved Him. I think that our Lord was never fairer to the eyes of His Father than when He was all ruddy with His bloody sweat. And that He never seemed lovelier to Him than when His obedient hands were given to the nails and His willing feet were fastened to the tree. Then must He have seemed to be God's rose and lily, first spotless, then all bloodied—the gathering up of all the loveliness of which only the Infinite mind of God could conceive. The Well-Beloved was always dear to the Father—the Father was always well pleased with Him—and He is well pleased with Him now!

How little there is, even, about those of us who are the Lord's children which can please our heavenly Father, but God is always well pleased with Christ. We get to wandering away from Him. Our garments become defiled by sin. Sometimes the Lord has need to chide us and to chastise us, but as for His beloved Son, He is always well pleased with Him! And, blessed be His name, He is well pleased with us *in* Him! Oh, that we could always remember this glorious Truth of God! Still, whatever we may be, the finger of the great Father always points to His dear Son in Glory, and He says, "This, this is My beloved Son, in whom, notwithstanding all that His people do, I am always well pleased."

Let me read the text again a little differently and say that *God is perfectly pleased with Christ.* He could not be more pleased with Him than He is and there could not be anything in Christ that would be more pleasing to the Father than what there already is in Christ. I believe that the Father is perfectly well pleased with Christ as God, with Christ as Man, with Christ in the manger, with Christ preaching the Word throughout Judea, with Christ working miracles, with Christ in Pilate's Hall, with Christ upon the Cross, with Christ in the grave, with Christ risen again, with Christ at His right hand and with Christ soon to come in the glory of His Second Advent. The Father is always perfectly pleased with His beloved Son. What the great Father's mind is, none of us can know, for the finite cannot measure the Infinite. We have no standard that can apply to Him, but we are sure that it must need an Infinite Objective of delight to satisfy the Infinite mind of the Father—and Christ fully satisfies it.

Sometimes, when I have been very earnestly pleading with the Father in prayer, I have felt as if I could cry, "Hear me, O God, hear me, O my Father, hear me for Your dear Son's sake!" And then I have changed my plea and said, "Look at Him! Are you not well pleased with Him? Was there ever such beauty as You see in Him? Was there ever such obedience as He rendered to You? Was there ever such truth, such holiness, such absolute perfection as you see in Him?" And I have felt that then I had a good plea with God, for He is infinitely satisfied with His dear Son!

There is nothing to satisfy God in all the worlds He has made—He could make as many more, in a moment, if He pleased. There is nothing to satisfy Him in anything that is merely spoken into existence. But with His other Self, His Only-Begotten, in every condition and in every case, from every point of view, He is well pleased and perfectly satisfied—and well He may be, for Christ is worthy of His Father's satisfaction and delight.

Then further, to change our note, yet still to play much the same tune, *the Father is overflowingly pleased with Christ.* Can you catch my thought? The Father is not only pleased with Christ so much as to love Christ and to dwell in Christ, Himself, but He takes us up and He delights in us when we are in Christ because He has more delight in Christ then even Christ, Himself, can hold—and He wants more empty vessels into which to pour the rich wine of His soul's delight. He loves Jesus so much that He can afford to love poor wretched sinners such as we are for Christ's sake! He does, as it were, say to Himself, "I have filled the ocean bed of my dear Son's Nature with my Divine Love. Now bring here all the dried-up torrent-beds that you can find and I will fill them, also. Yes, bring here the dry Saharas, the wild deserts where never a drop of dew has fallen, and I will make them all to rejoice and blossom as the rose with this superfluity of love which I have to My dear Son! There is enough to make Me love, even the world, for His dear sake." Our Lord Jesus has so won the Infinite heart of the Most High that the Divine Love overflows to us!

Beloved, let us come and get under the drippings of this love! Here is Christ's cup running over—let us draw near and drink from the overflow of the love of God to Jesus Christ. You men, you women, you have committed so much sin that God cannot love you in yourselves—you have so offended His infinite justice that His pure and holy Nature repents that He ever made you! But look, look, I see another Man come in, a Man like ourselves, in every respect a true Man, but such a Man that when the great Father sees Him, He says to Him, "My Son, My Son, I am so delighted with You, the one perfect Man, that for Your sake I am glad that I made men. I am delighted that I made them in Your image. You shall be the Firstborn among many Brothers and Sisters. For Your sake I will not destroy men from off the face of the earth. For Your sake, for the sake of that one Man, My Fellow and yet Man, I will bless the untold multitudes whom I have chosen before the foundation of the world, and whom I give to You to be the reward of Your soul's travail, who shall be accepted in Your righteousness, loved because of My love to You and saved in Your salvation."

O Sirs, if you had Paul or Apollos here to speak on such a theme as this, even *they* might fail to deal with it as it deserves! Only God the Holy Spirit can make us get even the *shadow* of an idea of how much God loves His Son and how ready He is to love us, also, and how truly He *does* love us who are in Him!

That God should *pity* me, I can understand, but that, for the sake of His dear Son, He should actually take a complaisant delight in me and *love* me, this is, indeed, wonderful! And His Son has so loved me that He has espoused me to Himself. Before the earth was, He chose me for His

love—and now He loves me for His choice. Let this thought ravish your hearts—it is enough to do so! Before the daystar shot forth its first beams of light, the heart of Jesus Christ was set on you and He loves you, now, as much as He loved you, then, and He will always love you! When all the things that are shall have gone back into their natural non-existence, He will still love you with all the power of His Infinite mind! No, He is not only espoused to you and bound to love you, but He has taken you into a marriage union of the most mysterious kind—and He will never be content till He shall eat the marriage feast with you and you shall sit down with Him and the chorales of the universe, every sigh and sorrow hushed to rest, and every joy let loose from the secret treasury of bliss! As the Lord Jesus lives in Glory with His Father, so will He have you to be with Him at His right hand, to sit upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon His Throne!

I have also to say yet something more. *The Father is well pleased with His Son actively*. That is to say, His pleasure in His Son shows itself—He does something to honor His Son. When we pray, "Father, glorify Your Son," that prayer is only a faint echo of God's resolve and determination that He *will* glorify His Son. Can you picture that wondrous scene when He shall come in His Glory and all the holy angels with Him—He that once was spat upon, crucified, dead and buried—can you imagine the splendors of that august moment when Heaven shall empty out its legions of angels to accompany the returning Prince of the kings of the earth? Then shall sun and moon be ashamed and hide their diminished light, for the Lamb, Himself, shall shine with a brightness before which they shall be black as sackcloth of hair!

Then, with the ten thousand times ten thousand of His Father's courtiers who will come streaming out of Heaven's golden gates, He will sit upon the Throne of His Glory. I was going to try to picture the scene, but I could not possibly do it. I will only say, "Thus shall it be done unto the Man whom the King delights to honor," while ten thousand, thousand trumpets blow to raise the sleeping dead—and quick and dead from sea and land stand before His dread tribunal and every eye shall see Him—and they that hated Him shall call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and hide them from His face! In that day shall it be seen how God has resolved to prove His good pleasure in His Son by giving Him glory, honor, majesty, dominion, power and might forever and ever. Yes, dear Friends, God loves to glorify His Son! Here I must leave this part of my subject, for I want to come to a practical point in the latter portions of my discourse.

II. We have seen that the Father is well pleased with Christ. Now let me ask, in the second place, ARE WE ALSO WELL PLEASED WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? Can we look at Him and say, "This is my beloved Savior, in whom I am well pleased"?

If so, listen to this. *Here is the point where God and our souls can meet.* God loves Jesus—so do we. The Lord delights to glorify Jesus—so do we. He will make all things subservient to the honor of Christ—so would we. God's love is like the sun and we reflect its light just as little drops of dew that hang upon the blades of grass reflect it, but, as the dewdrop is

agreed with the sun, so are we agreed with God. I like to feel that, notwithstanding all my imperfections and sin, I can meet God in Christ! Can you meet Him there, dear Friends? I know that many of you can—what a blessed meeting place it is! Across that marred body of the spotless and lovely Jesus, God and man embrace one another! I am a sinner and the Father takes the sinner's hand, and says, "I have forgiven you for My dear Son's sake." And we stand there and say, "Heavenly Father, we bless You for Jesus. "And He says, "I gave Him to bless you, I intended Him to bless you, and now I delight that you should bless Him and should praise His name." You know that if you take us upon any other ground, there is a point of difference—God and man cannot agree until they come to the God-Man, Christ Jesus—and then, where God and man have met in one Person, and are joined together in an everlasting union, there God meets men and they are bound together in an alliance that shall never be broken! What a blessed thought this is! Our love to Christ enables us to find a meeting place with God in the Person of His dear Son.

Well, next, can we say that we are well pleased with Christ? Then, as the Father says He is well pleased with Christ, *here is a place for cooperation as well as for union*. Now we can be laborers *together* with God, for this is a work in which we delight, and it is a work in which God also delights. See, Brothers and Sisters, you can go and try to show how much you love the Savior. And when you do that, God is also showing how He loves the Savior. If this is the work in which you engage, you are sure to have God with you. Suppose you were to adopt some highly ambitious projects—for instance, the formation of a religious sect, the building up of a confraternity of which *you* would be the head, with the objective of honoring and glorifying *yourself*—well, you would have to look a long while before you would have God with you! But if the one aim of your life is to glorify Christ, you know that God the Father is with you, for it is His ever-present desire to glorify Christ!

If your ministry is full of Christ, it is a ministry that God can bless. "Oh," said a Brother to me, only today, speaking of a certain minister, "I could not hear him, for there is nothing of Christ in his sermons." Where there is nothing of Christ, Brothers and Sisters, there is nothing of unction, nothing of savor—and a man is quite right not to attend such a ministry as that. Leave Christ out of your preaching and you have taken the milk from the children! You have taken the strong meat from the men. But if your objective as a teacher or preacher is to glorify Christ and to lead men to love Him and trust Him, why, that is the very work upon which the heart of God, Himself, is set! The Lord and you are pulling together—and God the Holy Spirit can set His seal to a work like that! Is it not a marvelous thing that we should be workers together with God?

When He made the skies, we could not help Him. When He lit up the stars, we could not help Him. When He rules nations, we cannot help Him. But when He comes to glorify His Son, then we can be workers together with Him! It is by means of men, by the use of instruments, that Christ is to be glorified! And, therefore, here is a sphere for us in which our weakness stands side by side with Omnipotence! Our folly is taught

of Divine Wisdom and made to co-operate with Omniscience! I bless the Lord that He said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," for as we, also, are well pleased with Him, here is a blessed point of co-operation!

Once more, if we can say, "Yes, we are well pleased with Christ," then we have before us *a fountain of pleasure*. Are you pleased with Christ? Then you may *always* be pleased! Are you well pleased with Christ? Then you shall never lose the source and spring of your pleasure! Not long ago you were well pleased with a dear wife, but she is gone, yet the Lord lives. It is but a little while ago that you were well pleased with a sweet child. The lamb has been caught away to the heavenly fold, but the Good Shepherd is with you always—you can still be well pleased with Him! A few years ago we were pleased with our physical strength and with our youthful vigor. It is all gone, now, but Jesus is not gone—we can still be well pleased with Him! By-and-by, we may come into such stress of circumstances that all that pleased us shall be a dissolving view. Our wealth will leave us, or we shall leave it. All that lies below must be renounced, for a film is coming over the eyes and the breath is drawn with pain, and the spirit is about to depart to God who gave it.

Ah, then, Beloved, it will be a blessed thing to be well pleased with Jesus, for He will be with us in death, and with us throughout eternity! If you are well pleased with Christ, you have a fountain which neither frost can freeze nor heat can dry. We may be too well pleased with earthly friends and we may make idols of them, but we can never idolize Christ. We may worship Him, for He is God and He, therefore, deserves our homage and adoration. There is no fear that we can lavish too much affection upon His Divine Person. You may be well pleased with Him and be still more well pleased with Him, and be better pleased and better pleased, still, with Him the older you grow! And in Heaven, itself, you may still continue to be more and more completely taken up with Him, for is He not the river of pleasure which is at the right hand of God forever? Oh, yes! It is a blessed thing to have our good pleasure in Christ since it will endure world without end!

But, once again, if you can say of Christ that you are well pleased with Him, I think it suggests to you *a line of testimony*. People need, sometimes, to say a word to others to do them good. Do you not think that it would be a very easy thing, sometimes, to say, "I wish you would let me tell you of a Friend of mine, and what He did for me"? You could not preach, perhaps, but you could, any one of you, tell the story of what Jesus did for you. "I do not know," says one, "I should break down if I tried." Well, that would not matter—it might be a grand thing to break down, as you might also break down the person to whom you were talking—and the two of you, breaking down, you might, perhaps, take to your knees and get nearer to God that way than in any other! I think that even the most humble Christian woman might find somebody, possibly of her own rank and sex, to whom she could say, "I would like to tell you about my dear Friend." Why, they might think they were going to hear a piece of gossip, you know! Perhaps they would lend their ears at once and then they would be surprised to find what a dear Friend is Jesus.

Possibly they would be wonder struck—at any rate, I am sure they would remember it better than they would a sermon from me, because it would come with a surprise power which would take possession of their thoughts!

"Oh, but," you say, "I could not speak that way." I do not believe that you could hold your tongue if you really tried to speak for Jesus. I believe that if you once began, you would be obliged to go on. I have heard of a good woman who said that she could not come before the Church to tell of her love to Christ. And when they said, "Well, then, we think we cannot receive you," she said, "But I could die for Him." "Oh!" said the minister, "that is better than anything else that you could say. If you say you could die for Christ, come along with you, you have already said enough." I do wish that, sometimes, as the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," you would break the silence, and say, "This is my beloved Savior, in whom I am well pleased—

'In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,
And my heart leaps at the sound of His name.'

"I must tell somebody. I cannot keep such a good thing all to myself." I suggest it to you as a line of testimony, very simple and very easy to sincere-hearted persons, that you should imitate the Great Father in this respect and publicly or privately, according as you have opportunity, express your love to Christ.

If anybody in this Tabernacle can say, "Yes, I am well pleased with Christ, I delight in Him," I think that fact may be to you *a very blessed token for good*. Faith in Christ ought to come first and I used to think it always did. But I correct myself as I go on learning. I meet with a great many persons who have a very sincere love to Christ, which love does not bring them any comfort, or bring them salvation, either, because they have not learned to *trust* Christ. The trust in Christ that saves the soul is not admiration of His Person or even love of Him—it is faith in His atoning Sacrifice, reliance upon His finished work. And if you are relying upon Him, you can then say, "I love Him, I delight in Him, I rejoice in everything about Him, He is very dear to me."

Well now, how came this about? It is the work of Grace in your soul, for by nature we are enemies to God by wicked works, and if there is in your heart a trustful love for Jesus, so that you are well pleased with Him—depend upon it, the Spirit of God has been at work in your soul and you are a new creature in Christ Jesus! The kind of faith that I have seen in some, and which I am sure is good sound faith, is this. One said, "I believe myself to be the most unworthy creature who ever lived and I cannot understand why God should have the slightest love to such a wretch as I am. But I do trust myself on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart and I feel an inward union to Him. I love Him and I long to be with Him and, somehow, I feel certain that He will never cast me into Hell." No, dear Heart, how could He? How could He cast out one who loved Him? How could He cast out one who trusted Him? What? Shall it be said in Hell, "Here is a sinner who trusted the Savior"? Never! What? Shall they say, "Here is one in the unquenchable fire who was united to God in Christ Jesus"? It is impossible! Such a thing can never

be! Therefore have no fear about it. With this trust in Christ you may live, you may die, you may rise again, you may stand in the Day of Judgement! If you are well pleased with Christ, God is well pleased with you. If you delight in Christ, God delights in you. This is a seal of the Spirit of God upon His work in your heart and you may go away and rejoice.

Only take notice of this one thing. Imitation is the sincerest form of admiration and if you really, *trustfully,* love the Savior, you will endeavor to be like He. It will be your desire at all times to tread in His footsteps. "Well," says one, "I sincerely hope that I may do so. May the Holy Spirit help me! But one thing I know, I rejoice in my dear Savior's name." I can say that, too, yet, when I get home, tonight, it is very likely that I shall feel very, very, very weary and possibly, all of a sudden, a spirit of depression will come over me. It often does when one is very weary. And then I fall back on this fact—I did my best to extol my Master. I have preached nothing else but Christ and—

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

and He will not cast me away! I have no hope but in Him and He cannot put me away!

O dear Souls, cling to my Lord! If you cannot do that, look to my Lord, trust to my Lord, be well pleased with my Lord and my Lord shall be well pleased with you! I do not ask of you a difficult thing, for, if ever there was One with whom we ought to be well pleased, it is the Son of God, who became the Son of Mary, that He might save us from our sins! Oh, think much of that wondrous love of His! If we do not admire it and love Him for it, surely our hearts are turned to stone! May God break them and give us new ones—and enable us henceforth to love Christ with all our heart, mind, soul and strength! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 2; MATTHEW 3.

Psalm 2:1-3. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* The conspiracy was both strong and influential, The kings and the rulers combined against Jehovah and against His Christ. They were very determined. They set themselves with resolute purpose. They took counsel together. They were full of a horrible enthusiasm—they raged—they thought the work as good as done, but they imagined a vain thing. The fight was against Jehovah and against His Anointed, the Christ, the Messiah! What came of it all? Did they break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from them? Listen—

4. *He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.* For what can mortals be as compared with the Eternal? The fire

can readily enough consume the twigs. Shall men set themselves in opposition to Omnipotence and hope to prosper? And when God determines to glorify His anointed Son, shall worms of the dust prevent Him from doing so? What can come of all their opposition? God simply laughs at them—Jehovah has them in derision!

5. *Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.* He scarcely needs to lift His hand! He has only to speak and when Jehovah speaks in wrath, His words are thunderbolts! Men's hearts are indeed troubled when God's Words come hot with anger into their spirits. This is what God said—

6. *Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.* "You have raged, you have deliberated, you have resolved, but it is all nothing! There is My Son, the crowned King." And such is the Anointed tonight—the Christ is on the Throne—let His enemies say what they will, He must reign, nothing can prevent it! He must be King of kings and Lord of lords, for thus is it written concerning Him.

7. *I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.* This is the seal of the Anointed. He is the Son of the Highest, the only-begotten Son of the Father, who says to Him, "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You."

8. *Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.* Christ is asking of His Father—even He cannot have what He desires without asking for it! Prayer is so essential to the progress of the Kingdom of Christ that even Christ, Himself, must ask! But then God has promised to give to Christ the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth to be His possession. This is the great strength of all missionary enterprise. Dear Friends, we may be quite sure that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord when we read such a text as this—"I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession." If men will not yield to the Lord when He is made known to them. If they resist the drawings of Divine Love, what will happen? Listen—

9, 10. *You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces, like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth.* "You rulers, you magistrates, you senators, you governors of the earth, be wise, be instructed."

11. *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* "If you are wise, you will obey the superior King—you will yield obedience to the great Lord of All."

12. *Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.* The kings and rulers are bid to do this—let each one of *us* do the same—let us give the kiss of homage to Him whom God has made to be our King and take Him to be our Lord and Ruler forever and ever.

12. *Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.* It is so. Those of us who have tried it can bear our witness that it is so—there is no life like a life of trust in God. The nearest approach to Heaven that we can live in this mortal body is a life of simple confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now let us read concerning our Lord's first coming and appearance among the sons of men. Turn to the Gospel according to Matthew, at the third chapter.

Matthew 3:1, 2. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* There is no entering the Kingdom of Heaven without leaving the kingdom of darkness! We must repent of sin, or we cannot receive the blessings of salvation! Of every man, whoever he may be, whether outwardly moral or openly wicked, repentance is required. It is the door of hope—there is no other way into the Kingdom—"Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

3, 4. *For this is He that was spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a belt about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.* His raiment and his food were like his doctrine—rough and simple. There was no mincing of words, no making of pretty phrases with John the Baptist! His message was simply, "Repent you: repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is coming." We need more of this John the Baptist teaching nowadays, that men may be plainly told their faults and warned to put away those faults that they may receive Christ Jesus as their Savior!

5-7. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* These were the influential people of the times—the Pharisees were the Ritualists of that age, and the Sadducees were the Rationalists of the period. Why, John, you ought to have smoothed your tongue, a bit, and have said some very pleasant words to these great men, for, by so doing, perhaps you might have won some of these Pharisees, or coaxed some of these Sadducees into the Kingdom! Ah, no, that is not John's method! He is plainspoken and he deals truthfully with his hearers, for he knows that converts made by flattery are but flattering converts that are of no real value!

8, 9. *Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within ourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham!* Pointing to the stones in the River Jordan and all along the banks, he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "There is nothing, after all, in your natural descent from Abraham. God has promised that Abraham shall have a seed, but think not that He is dependent upon *you* for that seed—He can fulfill His promise without you! He can turn the very pebbles of the stream into children for Abraham! God is not short of men to save. If some of you will not have Him, do not think that He shall have to come a-begging to you. There are others who will have Him and His rich Sovereign Grace will find them! Beware, you that are proud and think much of yourselves, for God will not humble Himself for you! He has regard to the humble and the lowly, but the proud He knows afar off."

10-12. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire, whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.* The Christ is the Minister of Mercy, but there is about His Doctrine a searching and a trying power! Only the sincere in heart can endure Christ's winnowing fan. As for the insincere, they are blown away like the chaff on the threshing floor—their end is destruction! God give us to be numbered among the wheat that Christ shall gather into His heavenly garner!

13, 14. *Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbid Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and come You to me?* It seemed very strange that John, the servant, should be required to baptize Jesus, the Master.

15. *And Jesus answering said unto Him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him.* That is to say the Teacher must, Himself, obey the laws which He is about to lay down. And, inasmuch as He is going to bid others to be baptized, He will set the example and be, Himself, baptized! I think, also, that the Baptism of Christ was the picture, the type, the symbol of the work which He afterwards accomplished. He was immersed in suffering. He died and was buried in the tomb. He rose again from the grave—and all that is set forth in the outward symbol of His baptism in the River Jordan!

16, 17. *And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This in My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* And we are well pleased with Him, too.

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.

SPRINGTIME IN NATURE AND GRACE
NO. 2410

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 23, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 1, 1887.

"For as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."
Isaiah 55:10-13.

THIS is a text for the springtime! If you read it through tomorrow morning, before the smoke has clouded the heavens, while yet the earliest birds are calling up their mates to sing, you will understand its meaning better than I can make you comprehend it by any words of mine. The whole four verses seem to describe a scene in nature which is only to be witnessed about this time of the year, yet I am not going to look into the poetical meaning of the text so much as to use it as a description of personal experience. I think, no—I am *sure* that there are many of us who have passed through our spiritual winter. We have also had our spring—we are even coming to our summer—and there are some whose ripe and mellow experience has the peacefulness of autumn about it. Our lives are, in miniature, like the years that so quickly follow one another and every year does but repeat the changes in our lives! I want, at this time, to speak about springtime in our spiritual experience—touching, however, upon a more advanced period, as it will be necessary to do—but my first word is to be concerning our springtime experience.

Brothers and Sisters, by nature we lie in the cold and death of winter—everything is frost-bound, withered, dead. We are nothing. We yield nothing. We can do nothing. The Word of God comes to us as the beams of the sun pour down their warmth from the heavens and, by a mighty and mysterious influence, that Word begins to work upon us and we soon feel that we have entered upon quite another season of life. We are no longer in the cold winter—we have come to a blessed springtime! That is the theme upon which I am going to now speak.

I. First, notice in the text the descent of the Word, THE DOWNCOMING—"As the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven."

Our spring begins with April showers alternating with rough winds. There is sure to be, at this period of the year, a rainy season to prepare

the earth for bringing forth fruit, to swell the buds on the trees and to work with sunshine to produce the spring. So is it *spiritually*—the coming down of the Word of God is, to our hearts, like the falling of the rain from Heaven.

Concerning this coming down, I may say, first, that *it is usually unpleasant*. We are accustomed to speak of rainy weather and especially of snowy weather, as, "bad" weather. We are the wisest people in the world in matters relating to the weather. Having, as some say, no "climate"—only "weather"—we talk a great deal about it and inform each other what kind of weather it is when one can see just as well as the other what it is! Now, when we spiritually begin to live, it is usually rough weather and we are apt to think it is bad weather. Drip, drip, drip, fall showers of repentance. Snowflake after snowflake falls and buries all our hopes. Our joys are covered as with a winding-sheet. It is bad weather with us and we are not slow to complain of it. Oh, dear Friends, if we did but know how God is blessing us—if we could but realize that these experiences are working out our lasting good—we would thank God that His Word comes down upon us as the rain and the snow fall from Heaven!

The work of Grace in our hearts, however, is like a spring shower in another respect. *It differs very much in its method*, for rain and snow do not always come down in the same way. Sometimes the rain fails very gently—we can hardly tell whether it is rain or not. Our Scotch friends would call it "a mist." At another time, the rain, like Jehu the son of Nimshi, drives furiously. Big drops come pouring down and before we can reach a shelter we are wet through and through. So is it with the snow—it falls at times as gently as the dropping of tiny feathers, but it may descend thick and fast—a blizzard blowing it into our faces and almost blinding us. So, there are some to whom God's Word comes very softly. It does come, but it comes without tempest or storm. There are others to whom it comes very terribly—the Word of the Lord is full of dread to them—it is a tempest, a whirlwind. The rain or the snow comes down to them and there is no mistaking it—they are shivered through and through with its cold, they are wet to the skin with its moisture! Therefore, learn this, you who have been comparing yourselves with others, that as the rain at one time differs from the rain at another time, and as the snow in one place varies from the snow in another place, and yet the rain is always rain, and the snow is always snow, so the entrance of Divine Grace into one heart differs from the way it enters into another, yet it is always the same Grace!

In like manner, Brothers and Sisters, the coming down of the snow and of the rain *differs, also, in time and in quantity*. One shower is quickly over and another lasts all day and all night. The snow may in one season fall heavily for a few hours only. At another time, a week of snow may be experienced. So, the work of Divine Grace, when it begins in the soul, is not very manifestly the same in different persons. Some of us were, for years, subject to the operations of God's Spirit, and endured much pain and sorrow before we found peace in believing. Others find Christ in a few minutes and leap out of darkness into light by a single spring! I have known some whose convictions have been so brief and have been so completely swallowed up by their almost immediate faith,

that it has been a trouble to them to know whether they were ever truly convinced of sin at all! On the other hand, I have known many who have been so long shut up in Giant Despair's dungeons that they have thought that they were the men in the iron cage—that they were given over to destruction and could never find salvation! Judge nothing, I pray you, after this fashion, but remember that God's Word, as it comes down like the rain and the snow from Heaven, yet has varied methods of reaching different hearts.

One thing more I may say about this coming down of the Word of God and that is, *it is always a blessing, and never a curse*. If the rain should pour down very heavily and continue to fall until we might be led to think that the very heavens would weep themselves away, yet, Brothers and Sisters, it can never produce a flood that would drown the world, for yonder in the heavens is the rainbow of the Covenant! These rains *must* mean blessing, they cannot mean destruction. And if the snow should fall ever so deep, yet not even by snow will God destroy the earth any more than by a flood. So, when God's Grace comes streaming into the heart, it may produce deep conviction, it may sweep away the refuges of lies, it may cover up and bury beneath its fall every carnal hope—but it cannot be a flood to destroy you! There shall yet come a change of weather for you and your soul shall live. Let the Grace of God but come and let that Grace come how it may—it is always a benediction to the man who receives it.

Thus have I described to you the first part of our spiritual springtime, when, at last, our long winter begins to yield beneath the sunlight of Divine Grace. The Word of the Lord comes down upon us like the snow and the rain that fall upon the earth.

II. The second thing to notice in our text is, THE ABIDING. We have had the coming down—now follows the abiding of the rain or the snow that comes down from Heaven—"it returns not there, but waters the earth." So is it spiritually—when God's Grace falls from Heaven, it comes to stay!

My dear Hearers, this morning [Sermon #1961, Volume 33—*S.S.—Or, the Sinner Saved*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] I had to complain of some that they were like the rock upon which the rain falls, but which it never enters. It drops upon the granite and runs down the side of it, but produces no result. But when God sends His Grace from Heaven, you may know it by this sign—soaks into your soul! Oh, how much of my preaching there is, and how much of other people's preaching there is, that reaches the ears and that is the end of it! Oh, for hearers who drink in the Word of the Lord! O rain from Heaven, would God that you did always find us like plowed fields ready to drink you in! This is how Grace works—it enters the soul, penetrates the heart, saturates the conscience, abides in the memory, affects the affections, gives understanding to the understanding and imparts real life to the heart—which is the seat of life! I wish that we always heard the Gospel in that fashion, but hearing is often mere child's play. If it were true hearing, it would be the most serious work under Heaven and it would be done in a reverential manner as a true part of Divine worship! Then we should find

the Word of God soaking into men's hearts as the snow and the rain from Heaven enter the earth.

It appears from our text that this downpour, instead of returning to Heaven, does this, also, for the soul into which it soaks—it fertilizes it, *it makes the soul bring forth and bud*. Yes, but the metaphor of my text cannot set forth the whole Truth, for this Word of God, which is the rain, is also the Seed. This Word of God, which is the snow, is the living Seed, itself. What would we think of clouds that rained down seeds? That would be a new thing beneath the heavens, yet it is the old thing, after all! The Word of God is the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever and whenever that Seed is sown, God's Word comes soaking into the soul, making the soul live, and causing the heart to yield its life up to the living Seed. I cannot distinguish between the Seed and the soil in my metaphor, for it seems as if the very soil did breed the Seed and take it up into itself, and cause it to grow, causing it to bring forth and bud. O Beloved, if the Word of God has been to you like an uncomfortable shower, may it afterwards prove its living power, making you feel a new life that you never felt before, a something within, struggling, striving, a something which, of itself, was not previously there, but which comes with the heavenly Word and is, indeed, the sure evidence of the beginning of the new life within your soul!

And, again, the Word of God, when it comes into the soul and abides there, *works in the man whatever God pleases*—all His Divine purposes—"it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." It is a very wonderful thing to get the Word of God thoroughly into your soul, to get soaked and saturated with it. We have, none of us, any idea what that Word may yet do for us. Who among us knows the Infinite reaches of the Divine purpose? Who shall cast the lead and fathom all the Divine intentions concerning man? Verily, "it does not yet appear what we shall be," but when the Word of God is truly in us, it will work whatever the Divine purpose is and carry it out to the fullest without fail, for the Word of God is living and powerful to effect the designs and purposes of the Most High!

My beloved Hearers, open your hearts to this Word—drink it in—do not stay its course, do not try to hinder its Divine operations. Pray to be completely under its influence, for you do not know how holy, how strong, how happy, how heavenly you may yet be! This, then, is how our spiritual springtime comes to us—first, showers under which we tremble and are troubled, but, afterwards, a Divine abiding which produces marvelous effects in our hearts and lives!

III. So, in the third place, I will briefly speak to you about THE RESULTS of the coming down and the abiding. The rain has come and the rain remains. Now what happens?

First, we are told, *it makes the earth to bring forth and bud*. I love the time of buds. There is nothing more beautiful than the rosebud—it is more charming, by far, than the full-blown rose! And the buds of all manner of flowers have a singular charm about them. But when the Grace of God has come into a young man's heart, we very soon see his buds—he has gracious purposes, he has holy resolves, he has the beginnings of prayer, he has the makings of a man of God about him! Child-

hood in Grace is a sweet budding time with many rare beauties and delights. Some of you, perhaps, are complaining of yourselves that you have not yet come to the perfection of flowering. Do not murmur on that account, but be thankful if you have only a bud. A little prayer, a faint desire after holiness, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness—these are buds—be grateful for them! There are some birds that like to eat the buds of trees and they do much mischief to the garden. And there are some old Christians who, I think, are rather too fond of nipping buds, and so doing damage to young beginners. May God keep these destructive birds away from you who, as yet, are but feeble.

Beloved, if you are what the Lord would have you to be, you will not long be content with buds. If you serve the Lord and the Lord continues to visit you with showers of blessing, you will soon *bring forth seed for the sower*. You, yourself, will become useful to others. Your experience, your knowledge, your service will become the seed of good for other people. The devil can never destroy the Church of God, or banish it altogether from the face of the earth, because, if there were only one Christian left in the world, he would be seed for other Christians, and I cannot tell you how many might spring from him! If all of us should die and there were only one of the dear children left who have lately joined this Church, yet the Church of God would spring up and flourish, again, from that one child! That Grace which first comes to you and fills you with conviction of sin, afterwards comes to you to make you to be the seed-corn for others!

Grace also makes us produce bread for the eater. I was thinking, today, that next Tuesday (May 3rd, 1887,) it will be just 37 years since I was baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! Up to that day, I had never opened my mouth for Christ. I had not even engaged in prayer at a Prayer Meeting, for I was very diffident and I was afraid to speak of spiritual things! I was not very old, so perhaps my timidity might be excused, but, 37 years ago, when I gave myself to Christ, I could not have imagined that I should stand here, tonight, to preach the Word to these thousands of people. The "bud" of that day has been "seed to the sower" and, blessed be God, it is still "bread to the eater." Oh, young men, you do not know what God can make of you! Young women, if you consecrate yourselves to Christ and come under the saturating influence of the Divine Word, you do not know how many your lips may feed, nor how many your word may even convert to Christ! You, too, shall furnish seed to the sower and bread to the eater. You may, perhaps, at first pass through a painful experience in which you will be made to see your own worthlessness, but you will, in due time, come out into a joyful experience in which God shall bless you, increase your usefulness and make you to be a blessing to those who are round about you!

There is one other thing that must be noticed under this head. The result of Divine Grace upon the heart is very amazing, so that I can hardly bring it under the metaphor of rain and snow, for *it works a transformation*. When rain falls on a plot of ground, if it is covered with weeds, it makes the *weeds* grow. But in the spiritual realm, the rain that comes down from Heaven, itself, sows the ground with good seed. What is more amazing, where it falls, it transforms the ground and the plants that come under its influence change their nature! "Instead of the thorn shall

come up the fir tree." If you were in Australia, you might see leagues of land covered with huge thistles and thorns. Down comes this shower of Grace upon man's nature, thus covered with thorns and, instead of thorns, come up fir trees—useful, delightful objects in the landscape—not gnarled and twisted thorns, but fair and comely fir trees!

"And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." When the Grace of God begins to work, a change is made in those who are like briers and they become like myrtles! Out at Mentone there are large tracts of land covered with myrtles, rosemary and other odoriferous plants. Often have I thrown myself down upon them as upon a spring bed, for they grow close together, and, as you rest upon them, a delightful perfume is round about you everywhere. Now, when the Grace of God comes into the soul, it takes the obnoxious things in us and transmutes them into blessings. Here is a man who is naturally of an obstinate disposition. You know him. When the Grace of God comes into his heart, he becomes firm in his attachment to the Truth of God. A fine character can be made out of an obstinate man—he is the one of whom you can make a martyr if necessary—he would be willing to burn for Christ's sake! You would never find him flinching.

Here is another person who is full of levity and trifling. The Grace of God comes and transforms that lightness into cheerfulness and amiability. He is the light of the house, you are glad to know such a person. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." This is wonderful Grace, is it not? I hope that some of us are now undergoing its transforming power in our hearts! This springtime of Grace is charming, far beyond that of nature, for nature, in her developments, still continues to bring forth the primeval thorns and thistles which our father, Adam, by his disobedience, brought to us. But the Grace of God changes these evil things and makes the soul to bring forth that which is good, pleasing, sweet and profitable—both to God and man!

IV. Now I have come to my last point. We have considered the coming down, the abiding and the result of the rain. Now let us notice THE REJOICING.

This is a time of joy—the music of the year is full in springtime. Birds get silent towards the end of autumn. That is the Sabbath of the year. God's bounty, then, has become so manifold that nature seems to feel that she cannot express her gratitude and even the birds, as a rule, are silent, then, but now they are bursting into song as trees are bursting into leaves and plants are bursting into flowers! I want that to be your experience in this springtime. I saw, the other day, outside a certain place of worship (!), the notice of "a free and easy." I wonder what kind of worship that is? However, though I do not know and cannot imagine, yet I should like you who are the Lord's to feel wonderfully "free and easy" in the highest sense! Now that the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds is come, let every child of God enjoy himself, for our text says, "You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Why should we be so happy? Why should every-

thing about us be so happy? Let us run the parallel between springtime in nature and in Grace.

In springtime, one cause of happiness is *new life*. Things have been dead, but they are now springing into life. The blood runs more quickly within our veins—our whole being now seems warm with the new life that courses through our nature! It is so spiritually. We have come into a new life, the Holy Spirit has breathed upon us and we live and, blessed be God, that life never gets old! After knowing the Lord these 37 years, as I have told you, I feel His love to be as sure as ever, and the power of His Grace as powerful as ever. There is a constant novelty about the life of faith. The mercies of God are new every morning and fresh every evening. Well, then, since you have a life of which you knew nothing before, since you can see all around you the tokens of a life which you never perceived before, be glad! Sing, tonight, you songsters of the Lord! Break out into sweet music because of the new life within you—that new life which can never die, but which shall, in due season, be enlarged and perfected into life forever before the Throne of God above!

Another source of joy in springtime is to be found in our *happy surroundings*. It is beginning to be warm. We hope, soon, to be able to sit out of doors in the sunshine. We trust that the dull and heavy clouds will not return and that the winds which pierced us to our very marrow will now be withheld from us. So we feel happy in the advent of spring and is it not so with us *spiritually*? We are no longer in bondage and no longer in fear! "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Reconciled through the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we joy in God. Let us be happy together and, coming to this table, whereon are spread the memorials of our Lord's great love to us, let us not come with dull and heavy hearts, as though we were assembled at a funeral, but let us meet in joyful anticipation of the day when we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb in Glory! New life and happy surroundings should make us clap our hands and rejoice before the Lord!

Springtime, I think, is peculiarly pleasant because of its *large promise*. We are thinking of the hay harvest and of the fruit of the fields. We are reckoning upon luscious grapes and upon the various fruits which faith sees to be hidden within the blossoms. Yes, but may not our hopes be disappointed if we reckon upon earthly fruits? But you and I have come, by Grace, into a land of hope most sure and steadfast! We have hopes grounded on God's Word and they shall never be disappointed! Let us be happy, then, since we shall certainly one day be in Heaven! Let us begin the music of Heaven down here. Since our Lord is on His way back to us and may arrive before this assembly breaks up, let us anticipate the joy of His glorious appearing. May God the Holy Spirit help us to think of all these choice mercies, that we may be glad in the Lord!

In springtime, once more, there always seems to me to be *a peculiar sense of Divine Power and Divine Presence throughout all nature*. It is as if nature had swooned, awhile, and lay in her cold fit through the winter, but now she has been awakened. Her Lord has looked her in the face and charmed her back to life! I trust that you and I feel this peculiar Presence of God in the highest sense. Some say that there is no God. Ah, me! Ah, me! Blind men say that there is no sun, perhaps, but they must be very

blind if they think so. We *know* that there is a God, not only by the argument from design, which is a very strong one, but by better evidence than that. We have had dealings with God, *personal* dealings with Him, as when the sun, though it is ninety-five millions of miles away, has commerce with the earth, and the bulbs that sleep beneath the black mold begin to swell and grow and, by-and-by, the yellow cup is held up to be filled with the light of the sun! There must be a sun, we know, because of all its warmth and genial glow, and the life force with which it charms the earth into the revival of spring! And though we have not seen God at any time, neither can conceive of Him in all His Glory, for He is essentially inconceivable, yet have we felt His Power charming into life our hope, our faith, our love! Sometimes, as the sun may be, for a while, hidden from us, a cloud obscures our God. Ah, me! What darkness then returns to us—how do all the young shoots seem to droop in the blackness! But when that cloud is gone and the light comes streaming out, again, O Lord, how we rejoice, how strong, how bright, how happy we are! If we have not wings, yet do we learn to fly *without* wings—we soon mount aloft when God, Himself, draws us towards Himself.

If you do not know God, my dear Hearer, conclude that there is a life which you have not yet discovered. As Columbus found a new world when his ships steered across the Atlantic, so may you yet discover a new world which you have not seen as yet. May God, Himself, steer your ship and bring you there! But do not tell us that there is no God, and no such new world—you cannot prove a negative, but we can prove a positive—namely, that we have entered into a new life, we have been in the new world! Suppose that I were to try to teach astronomy to a horse. I could not make him understand me, but if I possessed the power to put an immortal soul into that horse, how easily would his eyes look through the telescope and how speedily would he begin to rejoice in sun and moon and stars!

You, my dear Hearers, who are without God, are nothing but a soulish man at present, almost a brute man in some respects. There is a higher spirit that you need—oh, that you had it! God the Holy Spirit can breathe it into you. That is what we mean by *regeneration*. When He imparts a new and higher nature and when you have received that nature, then you will be able to say, "There is a God, for I perceive Him. I also have entered a new world. Things are the same as they used to be and yet they are wonderfully different! I see nothing as I used to see it. Before, I saw it as a brutish man, but now I see it as a man twice-born, who has become so exalted as to be near akin to God, Himself."

Then, dear Friends, when you reach that state, "You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." God give you saving faith and this new life of which I have been speaking, through Jesus Christ His Son! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55; PSALM 136.

Hear these Inspired words, dear Friends, as though they came fresh from Heaven, as though God Himself spoke them at this moment out of the excellent Glory, for, indeed, He does so. The Word of God never grows old—these messages are just as new as if the ink on the pens of the Prophet and the Psalmist were not yet dry.

Isaiah 55:1. *Ho! Everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.* This invitation is not given to you who are full, to you who can satisfy your own needs out of the buckets of your own righteousness. No, the Prophet speaks to you thirsty ones who feel an awful necessity which will not let you rest. Hunger you may appease, but thirst is terrible—none can long bear its pangs. "Ho, everyone that thirsts." Whatever your age, sex, character, rank, or position in life, if you do but thirst, then the Gospel stands with uplifted finger, and cries to you, "Ho!" as do merchants and traders who want to dispose of their wares.

1. *And he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* In the Lord Jesus Christ there is all you need and more than you know that you need! As yet you only thirst, but here is bread for your hunger as well as drink for your thirst. Whereas "waters" might seem to satisfy your thirst, here is a superfluity of Grace, an exceeding abundance of mercy—"Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Christ is as free as the air! As you have only to take in the air by breathing, in order to live by it, so have you only to receive Christ into your soul and you live by Him! As flows old Father Thames through the green meadows, and every dog may come and lap, and every ox may stand knee-deep in the stream, for there is none to keep even an animal away, so is it with Christ—"Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?* Why are you so busy about your ceremonies, your works, your feelings—none of which can yield food for your soul? Come to Christ and buy without money the Bread of Life which came down from Heaven!

2. *And your wages for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently to me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* If we will but hear the Gospel, and attentively hear it, "faith comes by hearing," and that faith leads us to Jesus Christ! And in Him we find that which is substantial, solid—the very thing we need. We find in Christ all that is super-excellent, so that our soul delights itself in fatness. I have no lean Christ to preach to you! No half-starved salvation that will drag you into Heaven and save you, "so as by fire." But in coming to Christ, you are invited to "let your soul delight itself in fatness." A Christian cannot be too happy—"the joy of the Lord" is beyond all description! You must taste it to prove its sweetness. As honey among the sweets, such is the joy of the Lord among joys! Yes, as the sun and the lesser lights in the sky, such is the joy of Christ compared with all other delights that men can ever know! "Let your soul delight itself in fatness."

3. *Incline your ear.* You know what that means—bend forward to catch the faintest utterance of the voice that is speaking.

3. *And come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live.* We do not live by sight. All the pretty things that you can see in a Roman Catholic place of worship will not save a single soul! The *preaching of the Gospel* is *God's*

way of salvation— "Hear, and your soul shall live." Christ rides into the City of Mansoul through Ear-Gate. Take heed *what* you hear and take heed *how* you hear!

3. *And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Think of God making a Covenant with you! This is a very wonderful thing. You may almost leap for joy at the thought that God should ever enter into Covenant with you. You think very little of yourself and reckon yourself to be among the most obscure of mankind. "Yet," says the Lord God, "I will strike hands with you and be your Friend, and pledge My Word to you. Yes, and make a Covenant with you—and an Everlasting Covenant it shall be, too. Surely, blessing, I will bless you." Oh, what a wonder of Divine Grace it is that God should enter into Covenant with sinful man! "Even the sure mercies of David." You know what David this is—this is the Son of David, the inheritor of great David's name, "great David's greater Son."

4. *Beheld, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* Jesus Christ is a witness to you of His Father's love. I do not know how God could show His love more fully than He does in the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the great Witness of the Father's love! Behold how He loves His people in that He gives His Son to die for them! Will you not clasp hands with God across this great Sacrifice of His only-begotten Son? Let us do so, now, again, as we have often done before. "I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." If He leads, let us follow. If He commands, let us obey. His command is that we are to believe in His name and to be baptized in His name—let us not be disobedient to any part of His holy will. Now comes a promise made to our great Leader, our Covenant Head—

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* That is, Jehovah has glorified Christ. It is promised that multitudes shall come to Him. "You shall call a nation that You know not." He never saw you in His House before. He never knew you to fall on your knees in prayer, but He is calling even you, by His Grace and by His Gospel! You are here, tonight, and He is calling you, even you! Therefore, come to Him at once! There are some, here, who do not know Christ Jesus our Lord. They are strangers to His love and to His power to save, but the promise is that, "nations that knew not You shall run unto You." That implies speed—it is a double quick march. Oh, that many sinners would at once run to Christ! Some who often hear the Gospel are very slow in coming to Christ, but I pray that some of you who do not know as much of it as they do, may run to Christ at once and be saved by Him. It is a blessed thing to take Christ at the first time of asking. Love to Christ at first sight is the wisest kind of love that can be! May it be largely bestowed on many of you! Listen to these next words

6, 7. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* Hear the

music of the glorious message, "He will have mercy!" "He will abundantly pardon!" Return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon you! He will abundantly pardon you!

8, 9. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Perhaps you are thinking that He cannot forgive you, that He cannot possibly mean that He will blot out *your* sins? But He *does* mean it, yes, and He is willing to do it *now*! Oh, that you would come to your pardoning God through Jesus Christ His dear Son!

10-13. *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* Now let us read the 136th Psalm.

Psalm 136:1-3. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords for His mercy endures forever.* In this Psalm we have the same refrain repeated 26 times! The words—"for His mercy endures forever," were probably intended to be taken up as a chorus by all the people in and round about the Temple at their solemn festivals. But though there is repetition, there is no tautology, for the saints of God are so fond of God's praise that they can never have too much of it. I am sure that if you have ever tasted the faithful mercy of God in Covenant with His people, you will never hear this sentence once too often! "For His mercy endures forever" will be a sound that shall be most welcome to your ears. You will observe that, first of all, the praise is to the Lord's Person—"O give thanks unto Jehovah…the God of gods…the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever." Next, the praise turns upon His works.

4-9. *To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: His mercy endures forever. To Him that made great lights, for His mercy endures forever: the sun to rule by day: for His mercy endures forever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever.* In the works of Creation and in the dispensations of Providence, we have abundant proofs of the perpetuity of God's lovingkindness. No sooner have we experienced the blessings of the day than the mercies of the night follow quickly upon their heels! If we look up to the heavens, we have instances of God's mercy, there, in kindling the stars and lighting the sun and moon. And if we look upon the waters, and the land that stands above them, we still see God's lovingkindness. That man is intensely blind who can see nothing of love and kindness in Creation! You have but to open your eyes

anywhere to see that the whole earth is full of the mercy of God! Still, the loudest song belongs to God's dealings with His Church and, therefore, in the 10th verse, we come to God's deliverance of His peculiar people, His chosen Israel, in which we also have our share, for in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth are blessed this day.

10-15. *To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever.* And you and I have experienced deliverances of the same kind! Our troubles have been overcome; our sins have been forgiven; we have been preserved by God's goodness and guided by His Wisdom. Let us, therefore, sing of that Covenant faithfulness and of that Immutable Truth of God which have never left us!

16-18. *To Him which led His people through the wilderness, for His mercy endures forever. To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings, for His mercy endures forever.* We are far too slow to recall the special mercies of God. We have, here, a bright example given us, not only to remember God's goodness in the lump, but in detail. We are, as it were, to take His mercies to pieces, that we may see fresh grounds for thanksgiving in every separate section!

19-23. *Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel, His servant: for His mercy endures forever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endures forever.* Here is a song for us—"Who remembered us in our low estate." We were brought low by sin, by conviction, by ignorance, by our own powerlessness—but, low as we were, "He remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endures forever."—

"He sent His Son with power to save
From guilt, and darkness, and the grave!
Wonders of Grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song."

24-26. *And has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever. Who gives food to all flesh: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of Heaven for His mercy endures forever.* Thus the Psalm finishes upon its keynote—"for His mercy endures forever." May that be the keynote both of our daily song and of our eternal hymn of praise unto the Lord! 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.

WHY SOME SEEKERS ARE NOT SAVED
NO. 2411

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 5, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 8, 1887.

"Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear."
Isaiah. 59:1, 2.

THERE are some people who are not saved though we would have expected that they would have been converted long ago. Our text explains the reason, so, without any preface, let us come to it at once.

I. First, let us consider THE FACT CONFESSED! The people of whom I am especially thinking, just now, have been *hearers of the Gospel*, and diligent hearers, too. Their seat is seldom vacant and they are not among those who go to sleep during the sermon. They do not enjoy the Sunday after the fashion of the countryman, who said that he liked that day best because he could go to church, put up his feet, fall asleep and think of nothing at all. The people to whom I am referring really *listen* to what the preacher has to say. They are attentive and they seek to retain in their memories the Truths of God he preaches. They even talk when they are at home of the striking passages, if such there are, in what they have heard. You would suppose that such persons would get a blessing from the Gospel, yet they do not.

They have now been listening for years to an earnest minister—they would not like to hear one who was not earnest. They have grown to be somewhat discriminating in their taste—they know what is the Gospel and they would not care to be present at a service in which the Gospel was not clearly set forth. Yet, for all this, they are not saved! They stand out in the shower, yet they are not wet! They are like Gideon's fleece, perfectly dry when all the ground was saturated with the dew. This is a strange circumstance, but, alas, by no means an uncommon one! We would not have thought that there could be such people, but we are compelled to believe that there are, for we frequently stumble across them—people who are often sitting under the sound of the Gospel, yet who never hear it with the ears of their heart! The light shines upon their eyes, yet they do not see it, for thick scales seem to be there to hide from them the beams of the sun.

You will be, perhaps, still more surprised when I add that there are some people who go *beyond hearing* and yet are not saved. *They have become men of prayer, after a fashion*—are they not described in the chapter I read to you? [Exposition of Isaiah 58 at end of sermon—ED.]"Yet

they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching God." These people are in such a state of mind that if they went to their business without the repetition of a form of prayer, they would be uneasy through the whole day! What is more, it is not merely a *form* of prayer—in some cases there is a measure of life, desire and earnestness in their devotions. Only this morning, one of them sighed when the sermon was over and he said, "Oh, that I could be a friend of God!"

And a few Sunday nights ago, the one of whom I am speaking, when he reached his home, fell on his knees in his own private room and asked God to bless the Word to his soul. This same thing happened to him ten or even 20 years ago—he has often been stirred up and driven to his knees in prayer—yet he has gone no further, but still remains, to his own consciousness, an undecided, hesitating person, on the borders of the Kingdom of God, yet not in the Kingdom—almost persuaded, yet not fully persuaded to be a Christian! You know, dear Hearers, and I hardly need tell you, that a man who is almost honest is a rogue, and the man who is almost a Christian is *not* a Christian! There was a man who was almost saved in a fire, but he was burned to death! There was another who was almost healed of a disease, but he died! There was one who was almost reprieved, but he was hanged—and there are many in Hell who were almost saved!

I am not talking, now, just to be talking. I know that with some of my most hopeful hearers, it is just as I have been describing it—they hear the Gospel and they pray to God, yet they have not gone beyond those outward exercises—they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and they have not received Him into their hearts as their own personal Savior.

I know, also, that *these people are greatly disappointed with themselves.* Not altogether so, for they know, to a great extent, where the blame lies, but yet they had hoped better things of themselves. If anyone had told them, ten, 12, or 20 years ago, that they would be where they now are, each one of them would have said, "I hope that will not be the case with me! I trust that, long before the time you mention, I shall have cast in my lot with the people of God and shall have been saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." They are still hoping, but their hope is curdling into *doubt* and their doubt is souring into *despair*—and I am very fearful lest that despair should lead them into still greater sin!

I want to speak especially to these friends. I shall do it with much kindness of heart towards them, but I wish to do it, also, with equal faithfulness, praying all the while that what I say may help them to escape from their present unsatisfactory and unsafe position.

II. So, in the second place, I call their attention to THE IMPUTATION IMPLIED AND MET. It is suggested to some, that inasmuch as they are not saved though they have put themselves in the way of saving ordinances, and though they have sought salvation, perhaps salvation is not so easily to be had as it used to be—perhaps Christ cannot save *them* as He has saved others!

Notice the first word of our text—"Behold." This is like our *nota bene*—mark well, turn your eye this way, *Ecce*—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." You are called upon to mark this—*distinctly to see it*—and to entertain no doubt about it! If you are not saved, it is *not* because God is unable to save you, nor is it because He is unwilling to hear your prayers!

Listen to this word, for *it is God Himself who speaks it*. He knows whether His hand is palsied, or whether His ear is deaf and, He, Himself, declares that His hand is *not* shortened that it cannot save, and that His ear is *not* heavy that it cannot hear. If you have any doubt about this fact, I recommend you to prove it for yourselves—come by *faith* to Jesus, and see whether He will save you. We sang just now—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,"

and if you think that it is a venture, if you fancy that, perhaps, the blood of Christ cannot cleanse you, or the Spirit of God cannot renew you, come and put the matter to the test! Dare, *now*, to cast yourself at Jesus' feet and say, "I believe that You can save me, and I trust You to be my Savior." If He does not save you—if He cannot do so—you have at least made the trial. But I beseech you to listen to this text—do not close your ears or your heart to its message—"Behold, behold, behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ears heavy, that they cannot hear."

This passage proves that *the power to save remains unimpaired with God*. Just as of old He forgave great sinners through the atoning Sacrifice of His well-beloved Son, so is He able to forgive great sinners now! He forgave the dying thief and He can forgive you! All manner of sin and of blasphemy have been forgiven of men and all manner of sin and of blasphemy can be forgiven of you. Though you had spent a lifetime in drunkenness, or unchastity, or dishonesty, or any other form of evil, though you should have grown gray in the service of sin and Satan—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,

still, still—

Lose all their guilty stains!"

There is the same power with God to forgive sin as there used to be, for the blood of Jesus is as powerful to cleanse as it ever was!

Note, also, that there is the same power of the Holy Spirit to change your nature as there ever was. He who turned Saul of Tarsus from an enemy into an Apostle can do the same with you. Of old, conversion was likened to the raising of the dead and He who has quickened many a dead soul can quicken your dead soul, and raise *you* from the dead! It was also called a new creation—and He who made all things new in other men can make all things new in you!

Look, Sirs, if you think that God cannot forgive sin, nowadays, as He did in the olden times, I stand here as a living witness to the contrary, for I know that He has pardoned me! It has always surprised me, but I do not think that in all my life I so much wondered at being a child of God as I wonder now. Thirty-seven years ago I was baptized into the sacred

name, and I adored the Grace of God, then, but not as much as I do now. What I owe to that Grace, it is not possible for me to express. Every time I preach to you, I feel unworthy of my sacred office and I would gladly run from it if I dared! But woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel! Yet I bear witness to this fact, that the Grace of God, which was able to save me, is able to save you! Here, give me your hand, you trembler, give me your hand! I wish that I could go round the galleries and down below in the area, there, and get a hold of your hands and say to each one of you, "My Brother, my Sister, the Lord can save you, He can save you! I am a witness that He can save you because He has saved me! His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save."

But I need not speak of myself, only. If it were proper, I could ask hundreds, yes, thousands of persons who are present this evening, at this service, to stand up and bear witness that the Lord saved them and that they firmly believe, after what has been worked in them, that no case is beyond the reach of Almighty Grace! Come along with you, then, do not cast blame upon *God*, as though your not being saved was the result of lack of power on the part of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit, for it is not so!

You say that it must be the lack of will, then, but it is not, *for the Lord's willingness to hear remains the same as ever*. You are called upon in the text to behold that His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear. You know that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear and if God resolved not to hear your prayers, then He would be, indeed, the possessor of a heavy ear. But He has not resolved to refuse your prayer! You may be unwilling to pray, but God is not unwilling to hear! "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." "For everyone that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." If you will come *in God's way*, and cast yourself *at Christ's feet*, and cry for mercy *for His sake*, you shall have it as surely as there is a God in Heaven! He knows that I lie not when I offer to be bondsman for my Master that He will keep His promise, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And that, "whoever" must include you! Call upon His name and prove for yourself the truth of the promise! Perhaps someone asks the question, "If what you tell me is true, why is it that I, who am really hearing, seeking and praying am not saved?" Now I want to try and answer that question.

III. Therefore, my third division will be, THE ACCUSATION PRESSED AND EXPLAINED.

If you will permit me, I will call upon you as a physician might. There is something the matter with you and you need to know what it is. I shall probably have to probe a little and, perhaps, have to go pretty deep. But if you really desire to receive a blessing, if there is anything which I say that fits your case, will you kindly take it home? Even if it should seem very personal and should make you feel cross, I cannot help that. You know that good blisters are not pleasant things, yet they may be very necessary. I want, if I can, to find out why it is that you have not obtained peace with God. The clue which guides me in my search is in the

second verse of my text, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear."

Now listen. *Your accusation against God may be turned against you.* You thought that God's hand was shortened, that it could not save, but it is *your* hand that is shortened, for you have not laid hold upon Christ! You have not taken your sins to Him to be put away. You have not turned to God with full purpose of heart—you are shorthanded, but the Lord is not. You said that God's ear was heavy. No, no, no! It is *your* ear that is heavy. You have not heard what God the Lord has been saying to you. You have not been obedient to the heavenly message. All the mischief lies with yourself, not with God! And at the last, if you are not saved, the blame will not rest upon the Savior, but upon yourself. This is the doctrine that we preach—if a man is saved, all the honor is to be given to Christ—but if a man is lost, all the blame is to be laid upon himself! You will find all true theology summed up in these two short sentences—salvation is all of the Grace of God—damnation is all of the will of man.

The real reason why you have not found peace, you who have sought it, is *sin*—not your sins in the abstract, for, "though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." No sin, whatever it is, shall ruin any man if he shall come to Christ for mercy. Though you are black as Hell's midnight through iniquity, yet if you will come to Christ, He is ready to cleanse you. It is sin, after all, that lies at the door and blocks your way to the Savior.

First, it may be *unconfessed sin.* Permit me to ask whether you have made, before God, a full and complete confession of your sin? I do not insist that you should go into the details of every sin—that would be impossible, but there must be no cloaking or attempting to hide any sin from God. There must be no wish to excuse yourself, or to make out that what might be sin in others was less sinful in you. The Romanist tries to get help in confession by going to his priest and the priest puts many questions to him to help his memory. We observe no such practice as that, for we believe it to be ruinous to the priest and mischievous to the man! But we do ask you to make confession to *God*, for remember that it is written, "If we confess our sins, *He* is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Remember how the prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight"? Have you said that? That is the beginning of the saved life—the acknowledgment of your former evil ways, the humble and truthful confession that you deserve the wrath of God on account of your sin—the putting of yourself into the dock, as one who pleads guilty, and who could not speak against God even if He took you at your word, and condemned you then and there!

You must take that position! You must not expect pardon till you plead guilty! Only acknowledge your transgression and *then* may you lay hold on Christ as your Savior and believe in Him for perfect pardon! It may be that you have never had peace with God because you have not made a confession of your sin in plain, distinct terms. It is no good to

mince matters with God—He knows all about you. Your secret sins—the sins your wife does not know and that no one knows but yourself—they are all known to Him! Go and whisper them into the great Father's ear, with many a tear of deep regret that you should have offended so grievously against Him. If you do not, unconfessed sin will be a barrier between your soul and God!

But, next, sin is a very great hindrance to Grace when it is *unforsaken sin*. Some men know they are doing wrong, yet they will not stop. They confess sin, yet still go on with it. They are half resolved to part with it, but they never really do. They know that it is the right eye that offends, but they dare not pluck it out. They know that it is the right hand that offends, but they will not cut it off. They are dilatory about this work and they still go on in sin. I appeal to your own conscience, can you expect God to pardon your sin while you continue in it? Can you think of the blessed Son of God coming to the world to be a minister of sin? That heart must be wicked to an awful extreme which will dare to say, "God is merciful, therefore I will continue in sin. We are saved by faith, alone, therefore I will believe in Christ and go on in my sin." Why, man, you are perverting the Gospel of Christ to your own destruction! You are making for yourself a deathbed which will be very terrible, since you are finding a way to Hell close by that wicket gate which lets men into the road to Heaven!

I pray you, do not desecrate the very Cross of Christ by hanging yourself upon it! There are some who do even that. You must forsake your sins if you would be saved. Christ has come to save His people *from* their sins, not *in* their sins. Drunkard, you cannot keep your cup and yet go to Heaven! I speak plainly. You who are accustomed to lie cannot have a lying tongue and a saved soul! If any of you cheat in business, do not talk to me about your faith in Christ! If you can lie and cheat, and act unfairly, you are of your father, the devil, and he will have you as surely as you live, unless you repent and turn from your evil ways! There is no real salvation except salvation from sinning, so your sin must be stopped. I put this question to any man here who is a hearer, and a seeker, and yet who does not find peace—"Is there not some sin that you have yet to abandon?" If there is, God help you, by His mighty Grace, to get rid of it at once!

There may also be some sin that has been forsaken, but it is still loved. *Sin hankered after* is a great barrier to Grace. When the cow's calf is taken away, how she bellows after it! And there is many a man who has had his sin taken away from him, yet he still longs after it. He does not sin with his hand or his foot, but he sins with his heart—his soul goes a-lusting after his iniquities. Now, while it is so, while sin still lies in the heart, can you expect to have peace with God? No, you must have the evil out, not only from the house, but from the *heart*. You must have done with it, not with the hand, only, but with the very desire of your spirit. "Oh," you say, "that is hard work!" It is harder work than you can accomplish! And in order to do it, you must be *born again*. This Truth of God should drive you to Christ that He may give you this new life by His

Holy Spirit! But, mark you, if it is not your desire to give up the love of sin, you will *never* find salvation while you are thus hankering after evil.

There are some who are hindered from finding peace, I do not doubt, *through sin of which they are not aware.* "Oh," you say, "that is rather a puzzling statement!" Well, there is many a man who is living in sin without being aware that it is sin, and that may keep him back from finding peace with God. I have to add this, also, that many men do not really want to find out! There are great numbers of people who do not want to learn too much about their sin! You know that light breaks in upon us by degrees—if we sin in the dark, that sin is not so grossly guilty and serious as sin in the light. But if we are in that darkness *willfully*, and we do not wish to have it removed, then we shall be guilty, indeed! If I commit a crime and then say, "I did not know that I was breaking the law," the judge says, "I cannot help your ignorance; you broke the law and you must bear the penalty."

But supposing I have a book at home that tells me all about the requirements of the law and I still say to the judge, "I did not know what the law forbade"? Then he would answer, "But you ought to have known. You have committed a double offense, as you have not studied the law. It was put into your house with a command that you should study it and you are, therefore, doubly guilty, for you have refused to pay sufficient respect to the law to learn what it says." I fear that some of you people are not conscious of your sin because you do not want to know it. Where ignorance is bliss, you think it folly to be wise, but it would not be folly to be wise unto salvation! Some of you are losing comfort, losing years of usefulness, losing all certainty about Heaven because you will not search the Scriptures and you do not desire to know what an evil thing it is in you which separates you and your God! O men and women, do not lie under such a charge as this! Say, "I will know the worst of my case. If I have to probe as with a lancet, I will find out what the mischief is. My prayer shall be, 'Lord, let me know the very worst of my case, that I may afterwards find that sure salvation which will stand the test, even, of the Day of Judgment itself!'"

I would further suggest that there may be some who are really seeking to believe, but they do not find peace because of some *sin of omission*. Does that open a window anywhere for any of you? It is not so much that you are doing wrong as that you are *not doing right*. You are forgetting some positive duty and it is *that* which separates you and your God. I have had some very curious experiences which I may never tell, so that the persons about whom I relate them will never be known. There was one which happened so long ago that I may tell it without fear. A man, through reading my sermons, was convinced of sin. He sought the Savior, but he found no peace. He was a long time in darkness and, at last, it was suggested to him that perhaps he found no peace with God because of some wrongdoing that remained unforgiven. It appeared that, some years before, he had robbed a person who was not aware of the theft. He had taken a large sum of money and he could never rest till that amount had been returned.

I never saw the man who had been robbed and I had to rack my brain to find a way by which I could return that large sum to him without giving him a clue as to who it was that took it. I managed the business and I have the receipt for the money, and I have never heard another word about it. And he who was in heaviness of heart is now a joyful Christian, as I firmly believe, though I have never seen him. The money he had taken from the other man lay upon his conscience and when the stolen sum had been restored to its rightful owner, God granted peace to the one who had made restitution. It may be that there is someone else who has something that does not belong to him. If so, let him, also, make restitution. If any of you have been fraudulent bankrupts, try to make up that twenty shillings in the pound, which you ought to have paid. Christ did not come into the world to let you live as a rogue and then, at last, sneak into Heaven. No, He would make you an honest man at once—and when He has done so, there will be another obstacle to your finding joy and peace out of the way.

Now let us aim once more at the target—I am trying to find out why it is that some seeking sinners cannot find peace. Do you not think that some fail to find peace because they have an *ugly temper*? Some people are born with nasty tempers—they are a poor inheritance for anybody. I heard one say that he was sorry that he had lost his temper. I was uncommonly glad to hear that he had lost it, but I regretted that he found it, again, so soon! There are persons who are at variance with their mother or their father and it is very sad when husbands and wives are at strife with one another—perhaps some such are listening to me now. You are praying, you say, and you wonder that God does not have mercy on you—and yet there is strife in the household! Or it may be that your poor girl ran away from home and if she were to come back, tonight, you would shut the door in her face, would you not? You are so good and respectable that you could not harbor your own child! Yet you expect God to take pity upon you, do you?

Or you parted from your husband in a pet and you have never gone back to him—and you want to find peace with God. Peace with God? Get peace with *man* before you talk about finding peace with God! You brothers and sisters have had a quarrel, and have made up your minds that you will never forgive one another. O Sirs, let me be very plain with you—if you cannot be at peace with your fellow men, you cannot hope to be at peace with God! The Lord bids you leave your offering at the altar—He must not be insulted with it—first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and seek peace with your God. Malice in the heart is altogether inconsistent with Grace, and it must be cast out. I know two brothers who will not speak to one another, yet one of them professes to be a Christian and the other says he wants to be one. What will God do with both of them? I cannot tell what to do with either of them, I am sure! A part of salvation is to save us from an evil, hateful, spirit, and to make us love God and love our fellow men, also. Perhaps that is the reason why some of you can find no peace—because you have been indulging an evil temper.

And do you not think, once more, that there are some who find no peace because of *an intellectual sin*? There are sins of intellect quite as surely as there are sins of ignorance. Some men know a great deal too much to go to Heaven—that is to say, they think that they know better than their Bibles and better than their God! Their dear mother, now in Heaven—oh, she was a poor, simple-minded creature! Their father, stern in his integrity—oh, he is a bigot! The preacher who proclaims the Gospel with all his heart and soul, and brings many to Christ—he is behind his times—he has no "culture." Bah! What fools! I cannot use a milder word to describe some of you! I only wish that the compliment I have thus paid you were true in the best sense, for if you *were* fools, you would enter into Heaven, but because you are so wise, you are more likely to miss the way! God has oftentimes chosen those who think *nothing* of themselves and are poor and needy, while the great ones who are proudly wise, disdain the road that lends to Paradise. Oh, be not too great to enter Heaven! Be converted and become as little children, otherwise you shall in no wise enter therein.

I am going to close my discourse, yet I do not want to say the last thing that comes into my mind. I have been describing a great many reasons why some people do not find peace with God, but sometimes there are reasons that I have not mentioned. One of these is the commission of *gross or secret sin*. Oh, the things that a man who cares for the souls of his fellows has to see and mourn over in this world! It must be 15 or 16 years ago that I was called to visit a dying man. I had seen him, before, when he was ill and in distress of mind, and I had tried to bring him to the Savior and to comfort him. He attended the Tabernacle constantly, but I could not make out why he did not find rest and peace. I often tried to remove various obstacles which I thought were in his way, but I never found out why he had no peace until after he was dead. Then I understood it. I cannot tell you all that there was in it, it is sufficient to say that he was living in known sin of the saddest kind. Kind, generous, loving—all you could wish him to be, but, alas, there was another household and another family found afterwards.

And then I understand that while he lived so, there could be no peace between him and God. I hardly like to say it, but I may be addressing somebody who is in a similar condition tonight. My dear Souls, do not try to live in sin and yet to be Christians! Do not pretend to hope in God while you are indulging secret vice—it cannot be so! You must either give up your sins or give up all hope of Heaven! Men and women, this is an evil age, full of impurity, and it behooves the minister of God, when he is dealing with men's souls, to speak very plainly, and I am forced to put the Truth of God to you thus. Nobody knows of your sin. You have never been found out, yet it may be that you are living in the constant commission of some secret sin. By the love you bear to your own souls and by your desire to find Christ, I beseech you to flee from the evil thing! Escape for your life! Flee from the wrath to come and then lay hold on eternal life, for there is salvation in Christ, there is life for a look at Him!

But that life consists, in great measure, in being healed of sin—and you cannot continue a foul life and yet be washed in the Savior's blood! It

is a contradiction in terms and a contradiction in fact. As I shall meet you, my Hearers, at the bar of God—and as a dying man who may never speak to you again, I thought that I would put this truth in such a way that, if I went home to bed to die, I should not have the blood of any of you resting upon my hands. I beseech you, by eternity, by Heaven, by Hell—*and there is a Hell*—let the smooth-tongued liars of this age say what they will—by Heaven, by Hell, and by your own immortality, fly to Christ, give up your sin and be saved by believing in Jesus even now! God grant it! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 58.

Verse 1. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up you voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.* See, Friends, how uninterested men are by nature? God's messengers must not only speak, they must speak very forcibly—they must speak as with the sound of a trumpet before men will hear them! Among the most uninterested of all are those who think themselves God's people, but who are not really and spiritually so. It is hard to reach the common sinner, but it is harder, still, to reach the baptized sinner, the man who professes to be a Christian, but who has only the name to live while he is spiritually dead.

2. *Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways,* They are careful to offer morning prayers—they would not go into their business without bending the knee to God—and they are eager and attentive hearers in the House of the Lord.

2. *As a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.* Is it not strange that men will often continue to take delight in the externals of religion, while they give their heart to their sins? Outwardly, they keep up with great regularity all the observances of religion, yet in heart they are far from God.

3. *Why have we fasted, say they, and then see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge?* They could not make out why they did not benefit by their religiousness. They fasted, but they did not find themselves improved, thereby. They afflicted their souls, yet they did not receive pardon for their sins, and they could not make it out. The Lord explained the mystery.

3. *Behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure; and exalt your labors.* It is very easy to abstain from eating food of a certain kind, yet you can make another kind of food just as palatable. And while you are resting, you may be compelling others to work for you. What is this but hypocrisy? I think it is a common saying among the Arabs and Egyptians, when a man is very ugly in temper, "One would think that he was keeping a fast," because it often happens in long fasts that men grow irritable. What is the good of fasting when that is the only result?

4. *Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness* Even in their fasts, they disputed with one another! One said

the fast should be on such a day, another would keep it on another day—and no doubt there are some professing Christians who are very zealous, mainly out of spite against other professors—they, with as much zeal, keep fast days or feast days the wrong way as others do the right way! It is a pity when this sort of party spirit is mixed up with the observances of religion!

4. *You shall not fast as you do this day.* Some fasted in order to appear very religious. "Oh," people would say, "such a man must be very good, he fasts three times a week." That is a kind of fasting to which God has no respect! To feed pride while we fast with the stomach is a poor way of showing how holy we are.

4, 5. *To make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?* The mere appearance of sorrow, the outward garb of mortification—what is there in that to please the Lord?

6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?* That is the kind of fasting which God cares for—when a man leaves off oppressing those who toil for him, when he makes their tasks lighter, when he seeks their comfort—when he no longer grinds them between the millstones that threaten to crush the life out of them.

7. *Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him, and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?* For they are your own flesh and blood! Though they may be total strangers to you, yet they are men like yourself. This is the fast that God delights in, when men take care to look after the poor and to relieve the distressed. When this is done—

8. *Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward.* Do not take those promises out of their context! Observe that they are made to those that clothe the naked, feed the hungry and care for the poor. If you have done this, then you can ask God to fulfill this promise, but not otherwise. Then, when you have done this—

9. *Then shall you call, and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, here I am.* If you have cared for the needy, God will care for you when you are needy. Is it not His way to reward the gift of even a cup of cold water to one of His disciples? Has He not promised that He will give back into our bosoms that which we have given to others for His sake?

9. *If you take away from the midst of you the yoke.* If you do not oppress anybody—

9. *The putting forth of the finger.* That is, the finger pointing scornfully at people and the contemptuous enquiry, "Who are *they*?"—looking down

upon your fellows who, perhaps, are far better than yourself—you must put all that away!

9. *And speaking vanity.* That constant idle talk of which some are so fond, that utterance of falsehood which many practice—that, also, must be put away.

10. *And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday.* Now mind again what I said just now—do not go stealing and run away with this promise without noticing the context in which it is placed—"If you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then your light shall dawn in darkness," but not till then!

11. *And the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.* What rich promises to the generous and the kind! There are some who scatter and yet increase, and there are others who withhold more than is meet, and it tends to poverty. These promises are distinctly made to those who *care for the needy and suffering.* My Brothers and Sisters, mind well what the Lord, here, teaches you, for these things are far better than fasting! Better than any outward ordinances, whatever, are real acts of kindness, for remember that the same God who said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind," made the second table of His Law to run thus, "and your neighbor as yourself."

12. *And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell In.* God's people are to seek to turn wildernesses into paradises! There is no part of the world so full of sorrow but the heart of the Believer may bring gladness to it!

13, 14. *If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: then shall you delight yourself in the LORD.* There is no doubt that a reverent, happy, joyful keeping of the Sabbath ministers greatly to spiritual advancement. Here is the promise made to those who delight in the Sabbath—

14. *And I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* God help us to be observant of the precepts of this chapter that its promises may be blessedly fulfilled in our experience! 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 SPECIAL BENEDICTION
NO. 2412

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 12, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 12, 1887.

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied."
Jude 1, 2.

THOSE were troublous times in which Jude wrote this very forcible Epistle. The first early days of Christianity, with all the springtime of the singing of birds and the blossoming of flowers had passed away. There had come times of trial for everyone, but worst of all were the troubles *within* the Church. Unawares, evil men had been admitted into membership. The human mind, always acting like leaven, had begun to corrupt, even, the Truth of the Gospel, so that where there had once been an unadulterated, unmingled preaching of the Cross of Christ, there had come in a savor of Gnosticism and other philosophies of the day. And with all the error there had also come a tendency to tone down the high spirituality, the deep sanctity of Christian life. So the children of God who truly cared for Him and walked with Him, were very sad at heart. I suppose that Paul had gone home to His reward. John still lingered and, perhaps, James and Peter, also, but when the time came for Peter to write his second Epistle, the day was darkening down—and when Jude took up *his* pen and wrote this short Epistle, the times were getting darker and darker and great foreboding of evil were in the hearts of God's servants—foreboding which were only removed by their joyous faith in Him who had gone from them and who would, by-and-by, come again without a sin-offering unto salvation!

This Epistle, therefore, seems to me to fit our times, which are not altogether unlike those of which I have been speaking, and the Apostle might have been writing yesterday, so appropriate are his words to the evils of the present age! If Jude were living, now, he might have to deal with a different form of evil, but, at the bottom, it would really be the same evil as that of which he wrote, the same mischievous root of bitterness which, springing up in our days, troubles us and, thereby, many are defiled.

I thought, as I read this Epistle through, that Jude seems to take the right view of things, namely, that the proper way of meeting evils in the Church is by dealing with the Church, itself—dealing with the truly faithful members of the Church and speaking to those who really are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called"— stirring them up to seek the highest degree of spiritual strength and plead-

ing for them that mercy and peace and love may be multiplied to them. If you have to visit infected places, it may help you to ward off disease if you, yourself, are vigorous and full of health. The best protection against surrounding evil will be the cultivation of a right state of heart and life, a continual growth in Grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. That wind which may upset yonder boat with its butterfly sails, may do no mischief, whatever, to the boat which is well ballasted and fitted to weather the gale. Be yourself right—listen to the Word of Wisdom which says, "Take heed unto yourself, and unto the doctrine"—and when these two matters are as they should be, then every wind of error which blows here and there will but little affect you.

Such I take it is the run of this Epistle and the opening verses are a fit preface thereto. I am going to speak of these two verses under three heads. First, here is a *special man*—"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." Next, the Epistle is written to *special persons*—"to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Then, thirdly, it contains a *special benediction*—"Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied."

I. First of all, it seems to me that the Apostle who wrote this Epistle was A SPECIAL MAN. Jude evidently wished to set himself apart from the general mass of those who were apostatizing and to make it known that he, himself, was strong in the faith and remaining faithful to his Lord.

To me, it seems as if every word of his own title has a specialty about it. There is something *special in his name*. He begins his Epistle with his own name—"Jude." Among the members of a certain denomination that I need not name, there is a practice of using initials when they write a book. I never find any instance of that custom in Scripture. "G.B." did not write an Epistle! And neither "A.B." nor "X.Y.Z." has favored us with any book of Holy Scripture! Names, however, are not always used. We have no name at the commencement of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for no writer in the Old or the New Testament gloried in his own name. Still, they were not ashamed of their names and since they were bound to make an open confession of their faith, it is as well that they used their names at the beginning of their writings.

This Epistle was written by Jude, that is to say, by Judas, but not Iscariot, and herein lies the specialty of his name. This Judas was *not* the son of perdition, but a true son of God, a sincere and earnest-hearted Believer. Yet, when he wrote his own name down, Judas, which we pronounce short as, "Jude," I think that the tears must have come to his eyes as he remembered that other Judas—with the same name, yes, and by birth with the same nature. If left to himself, he might have proved a traitor to his Master, like the other Judas—but Grace had made him to differ from the man who betrayed his Lord. If it had been your case, or mine, I am sure that we could not have written down that name without reflecting upon our obligations to the Sovereign Grace of God which kept us from being sons of perdition!

"There goes John Bradford but for the Grace of God," is a saying often quoted—and there would have gone this other Judas but for the Grace of God that restrained him! You remember how particular the Holy Spirit is that we should not mistake this Judas for Judas Iscariot, for when he

asked of Jesus, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world?" the Holy Spirit records the name of the questioner as, "Judas, not Iscariot." No, "not Iscariot." What a mercy for you that though some other of your name may have fallen into gross sin, you have been preserved! But as you remember your own name and remember how often that name has been defiled by others who at first were your companions in your childhood, thank God that He has kept you from falling. Do not think of your name without thinking of that name which is above all names, by which your name has been rescued from the Stygian bog and placed in the Book of the children of God among those whose names are written in Heaven! So, you see, there was something special, even, about the name of Jude.

There was something equally or still more special in his office. "Jude—Judas—the servant of Jesus Christ." Our Revised Version very properly puts in the margin "*bondservant* of Jesus Christ," and it is very beautiful to see how, in the original, these servants of Jesus Christ delighted to set forth the completeness of their service and to declare how perfectly they belonged to Christ. They were not servants that could come and go at their own pleasure, but they were *bondservants of Jesus Christ*. Though there were no free men on earth more truly free than they, yet these servants of Jesus Christ delighted in wearing chains of love which were soft as silk yet stronger than steel! They rejoiced to feel that they had no liberty to run away from Christ—their desire was to have their ear bored to the doorpost of His house, to be His servants through their whole lifetime and throughout eternity. This is what the Apostle meant when he wrote, "Jude, the bondservant of Jesus Christ."

You know how persons came to be bondservants in the olden time, according to Jewish practice. They were bondservants by *purchase*. When anyone had bought a slave with his money, the poor man was reckoned as belonging to him. So, we are not our own, we were bought with a price—we were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ—as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. The fine gentry in the ministry of the present day turn up their noses at this Truth of God and say that it is a *mercantile* idea. So it is, and we are not ashamed to have it so! "You are *bought* with a price," wrote the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, as if to make it clear beyond all question that it was really so! And you and I feel that we, too, have been bought and paid for, and that is one reason why we belong to Christ. We henceforth feel that we have no ownership rights over ourselves, yet we rejoice that we have that which is much more valuable, for we can, each one, say, with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Henceforth we have no claim over ourselves, but give ourselves over to Him who has bought us with His blood, for we are His *bondservants by purchase*.

Then there was another method by which a man became possessed of bondservants, that was by birth. Under the Law of God, the man born in the priest's house or bought with the priest's money, might eat of the holy things. There were some who were born under gracious influences. David makes mention of this when he says, in the 116th Psalm, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid." Having a godly mother, he reckoned that he was born into the

service of God. Even so, you and I, the twice-born, the really regenerate, have been born into the household of God and our regeneration binds us to the noble service of Him whom we call Master and Lord henceforth and forever! As naturally as the old nature rebels, the new nature obeys! And as naturally as the old Adam within us will have its own way, so naturally the new Adam bends to the will of Christ, for we possess another life than that we used to have—we have been born into a new world wherein dwells righteousness! Old things have passed away and all things have become new—and now we surrender our members, which once were instruments of unrighteousness—to become instruments of righteousness and we rejoice in being permitted to enter the service of our God.

Look again at this man, Jude. He does not even call himself an Apostle. Paul did, because with some it was a matter of dispute as to whether he *was* an Apostle or not, and it was necessary for him to assert his right to the title. But Jude, having no question upon that matter, takes the lower-higher title—for lower and higher are one in the Kingdom of Christ—and calls himself, "the bondservant of Jesus Christ." My dear Hearer, can you, also, take that title—a bondservant of Jesus Christ? Let the freethinker be free to go his own way if he will—you are a Christ-thinker and you wish to go Christ's way! Let the man who loves himself and seeks to please himself, do what he will! Henceforth you will love your Lord and seek to please Him, for you are, by purchase and by birth, the bondservant of Jesus Christ! Sometimes, also, men became bondservants by indenture. They entered into bonds of servitude for a set time and you and I have freely surrendered ourselves to Christ. We have entered into a covenant that we will be His forever. Paul wrote as if he had been branded with Christ's mark and I doubt not that Jude might have done the same. "From henceforth," says Paul, "let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He belonged undoubtedly, irrevocably, eternally, to the Lord Jesus Christ and he gloried in that fact! Dear Friends, will you not, also, glory in this if it is true of you?

Then Jude added another part of his title showing that he was *special in his relation*— "and brother of James." This expression seems to me to place Jude in a very pleasant light. He felt as if he was an especially favored person because he had for a brother that famous servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, James the Less, known among the Jews of old as James the Just, who had a reputation, even among the outside world for the great holiness of his life. This man was Jude's brother. Christianity teaches us to value brotherhood and we highly esteem those with whom we are joined in relationship, especially in the relationships which are of Grace. I like that any man should feel glad of his brother, thankful for his brother, and I am glad that Jude, when under Divine Inspiration, does not forget to say that he was, "the brother of James."

Some of us owe a great deal to our brothers and all of you have reason to thank God that you are the son of such an one, or that you are the father of such an one, or the sister of such an one, or the brother of such an one. There is a special mercy, probably, in your domestic position, and if there is, do not cease to praise God that He has given you to be associated in life with those who are associated with Him! May our chil-

dren be His children! May our friends be His friends! May our brothers be our Brothers in Christ!

II. Now, secondly, let us think of THE SPECIAL PEOPLE to whom Jude wrote this Epistle.

In this instance, the marginal reading of the Revised Version is, I doubt not, the more correct translation—"To them that are beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, being called." I shall take that as the best version, believing it to be strictly accurate.

The special persons to whom Jude wrote were, first, *beloved and sanctified*—"To them that are beloved in God the Father." O child of God, in times of darkness and of doubt, above all others, cling to the faith once delivered to the saints, because, according to it, you are beloved in God the Father, or, as our Authorized Version puts it, "Sanctified by God the Father," which means that, by reason of His eternal love to you, He set you apart unto Himself. To His spiritual Israel the Lord still says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." Before the earth was, or sun or moon or stars began to shine, the prescient eye of God was fixed on His beloved and He sanctified them unto Himself, "for the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

And because He had thus set them apart unto Himself, in fullness of time He redeemed them unto Himself, redeemed them from among men. "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," and in consequence of that love of His, He determined that those whom He had redeemed should be the instruments of His gracious working among the sons of men. They were to be vessels meet for the Master's use! They were to be the lamps in which His Light should be carried, the salt by which His preserving power should be made manifest amidst the putrefaction of the world! He set them apart for Himself and His service according to those ancient words, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise."

Out of this love and this separation there came a sanctification of another kind, namely, that of cleansing, for we were heirs of wrath even as others, polluted like others, but the Spirit of God fulfils the Divine purpose of separation—brings us out from the world, even as He brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees—and puts us in a separate path that we may be sojourners with God as all our fathers were. Then He washes us in the precious blood and in that water which flowed with the blood from the side of Jesus, that mystic Fountain opened on Calvary for the sin and uncleanness of the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

This is what is meant by being, "sanctified by God the Father." If you take the other translation, "beloved in God the Father," it comes to the same point, for love has a separating influence upon its object. If the love of a man is fixed upon one woman, he calls her his bride and he looks upon her as different from all other women on the face of the earth. She is always in his thoughts and in his heart, and her praise is often on his lips. He lives for her. Even so has God taken unto Himself a people who are His, alone.

In addition to being beloved and sanctified, they are also "*preserved in Christ Jesus*." This is a very sweet expression and conveys a very true meaning, but the exact translation is, "kept for Jesus Christ." To my mind, this is a most delightful Truth of God—it makes my eyes sparkle to think of our being kept for Jesus Christ as jewels that He, alone, must wear. "A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." "Kept for Jesus Christ." I wish that we all carried out this Divine purpose. What have I to do with idols? I am kept for Jesus Christ! What have I to do with seeking the things of this world? I am kept for Jesus Christ! What have I to do with living to myself, or to win the applause of men? What have I to do with the judgments of those who would be thought wise? What have we to do with *anything* but this—"Kept for Jesus Christ"? Our heart should be a cup from which no lip but His shall drink, a chalice consecrated to Him who has given Himself for us. Therefore let us have no eyes but for Jesus, no ears but for Jesus, no tongue but for Jesus—let us be always, only, all for Him!

"Kept for Jesus Christ." You must not touch that treasure—it is set apart for the King! You must not meddle with that man, you must not seek to engross the love of that woman—they are kept for Jesus Christ. It is to such people that Jude writes his Epistle. Others may be filthy dreamers, but these people are kept for Jesus Christ! Some may be wandering stars or trees plucked up by the roots, but these people are kept for Jesus Christ—kept *by* Him, kept *in* Him—but especially kept *for* Him. May the meaning of this precious Word of God be written upon all your hearts, beloved in Christ!

Then Jude adds, "*and called*." Do you not see the specialty running through all this description? Those who were beloved, sanctified and preserved, were also called! There is a call in the Gospel which comes to all men to whom it is proclaimed, yet all men are not "called" in the sense meant here. Brother, do you remember that day when you were called? The Gospel had called you many times and, up to that time, it had fallen upon deaf ears. But that day you were called! Just as Lazarus came forth out of the grave because he was called by Christ, so was it with you. You had been lying asleep, wrapped in the arms of sin—no, like Lazarus, you were actually *dead*—but that day there came a voice to you out of the excellent Glory! It was not a voice that you heard with the ears but, better than that, you heard it in your very soul and it was as clear a call from Christ to you as when He called out of Heaven to Saul of Tarsus, and said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"

I remember distinctly when the Lord first called me and I recollect it all the better because He has called me many times, since, for that blessed call continues and is often repeated! He called us, first, from death to life, then from darkness to light, then from a lesser light to a brighter one—and He has called us to go up, step by step! Not even the angels go up Jacob's ladder with a flight—they ascend it step by step—and every day and all the day there is a call that comes to some of us, "Friend, come up higher." When we are half inclined to sit down on the step of life and admire the golden way up which we have, up to now, ascended, we hear a voice that says to us, "Higher"—and there is our gracious God at the top of the ladder, still beckoning us to ascend, and say-

ing to us, again and again, "Seek you My face," and making us respond, "Your face, Lord, will we seek."

Those who are the beloved of the Lord are called. They have heard a voice which worldlings have not heard. They have seen a face which the blind men of this world have never seen. They have touched a hand and a mystic hand has touched them, which those dead ones who still lie in the Wicked One have never felt. They are the called—they are called by Christ to come out from among the ungodly, to be separate from them, to follow Him and to keep following Him till, at last, He bids them enter into His Glory to be with Him forever!

O Beloved, the blessings of the Gospel belong to men and women such as these, who have been set apart by Divine Love, who have been held apart and consecrated to Christ and who have been taken apart by effectual calling and so made to dwell apart to the glory of Christ, alone, and for His use only! Shall any Belshazzar drink out of these golden cups? God forbid! Shall Satan come and take away these crown jewels of the Prince and bedeck himself with them? God forbid! When I see professedly Christian men seeking worldly amusements and worldly honors, and thus giving themselves over to Belial, what can I think or say of them? God grant that it may not be so with any of us, but may we be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"!

III. Now I must close by noticing, with brevity, A SPECIAL BENEDICTION which Jude wished to these people, and this is to be the very pith and point of my sermon. It is, dear Friends, my special desire and prayer to God for all who are separated unto Him, that mercy, peace and love may be multiplied unto them.

Beloved, may you have *mercy*! You will always need it, for even a saint is still a sinner. May you have the mercy that will continue to forgive your sin, the mercy that will continue to wash your feet from the defilement of the way! May you have the mercies of Providence that will supply your need, the mercies that will sustain you under trial, the mercies that will lead you on from strength to strength! May you have much mercy, for you will need it and, blessed be God, "He delights in mercy."

Then, says the Apostle, he wishes that we may have *peace*. Oh, may you have it! The man who is at perfect peace with God, who is at perfect peace with his own conscience, who is at peace with all his fellow men, who especially cultivates peace by behaving himself aright in the household of God—this is the man who is strong in the midst of unrest and turmoil! This is the man who will stand firm when others flinch, for he can say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." May you have this peace, Beloved!

Jude next wishes that we may have *love.* That is to say, first, a sense of the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit, a ravishing realization that God loves us with that everlasting love which knows no measure, nor change, nor end. May your heart dance at the very *thought* of the infinite love of God which He displays towards you! And then may you have love towards men, loving your neighbor as yourself with that compassionate love which is pictured in the parable of the Samaritan, that love which does not say, "Be you warmed and be you filled," but

which proves itself to be real by *deeds of charity and acts of kindness*! May you abound in love to God's people. May your love be exceedingly abundant to those who are your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life! I wish, dear Friends, that you and I could be suffused with love. One said of Basil that he was a pillar of light—I do not so much care for that comparison as to be a pillar of *love*. Look at holy John next to his Master, surely, and chiefly so because he abounded in love.

The benediction of the Apostle is this—that this *mercy, peace, and love may be multiplied to you*. Is not that a beautiful word, "multiplied"?—not merely increased, but multiplied! You know what it is to increase—you add one to two, that is three—but when you *multiply*, you say, "Three times three, that is nine." Multiplying is a quick way of growing! Oh, that you had all these blessings multiplied—that, if you have had mercy, you might have ten times as much mercy—that, if you have had peace, you might have a deeper, fuller, richer, more abiding peace, multiplied peace, peace upon peace, "the peace of God, which passes all understanding"—and that, if you have had love, your love might be multiplied, squared, cubed! May the biggest figures that can be found multiply your love, for never did any man, yet, have too much love to God, or too much of the right kind of love to his fellow men! May the Lord make us to grow in Grace, to be filled with Grace, to have these three Graces multiplied unto us!

Now I come back to where I began. It was a dark time when Jude wrote this Epistle, but instead of saying to the Christian people, "You see that all these people have gone astray, the cause is in danger—go forth and fight with them"—he says, "mercy, and peace, and love, be multiplied unto you." The *Graces* of Christians will be the *defeat* of the enemy! If you need to improve a dark night, give us brighter stars, and if we need to enlighten a Dark Age, let us have brighter Christians! If there is mischief abroad in the world, the fault, dear Brothers and Sisters, is, to a great extent, in ourselves. If we lived wholly to God, people would better know what Christians are! I believe that the short way to the conversion of sinners is the sanctification of saints. If we had more faith, we would preach better. If we had more believing prayer, we would see more souls converted. If we lived nearer to God, it would be better for the far-off ones. Is it not written that when a man receives this Water of Life into himself it, "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" and, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"? God make you to be such reservoirs of Grace!

I have not spoken hardly a word to the unconverted, you see, because I want you professors so to live that your lives shall preach sermons. It is all very well to preach with the mouth, but the best sermons in the world are preached with the legs, with the life, by the walk and conversation of God's people! If there is piety at home, if there is uprightness in business, if there is a burning zeal for God in your common conversation, then the ungodly will say, "What does this mean?" And they will want to know more about it. How earnestly I wish that every person here who cannot be described as, "Kept for Jesus Christ," might long that it were so with him, and before he goes to bed, tonight, might pray that he may

belong to Christ! Then, giving himself up to Christ by faith, he may, this very night, know that sweet peace of which I spoke just now. So may it be with you all, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

Verses 1, 2. *Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.* Our holy faith breeds in us the best wishes for others. As we desire to find mercy, ourselves, so do we long that others, also, should find mercy and, as we rejoice in the peace and love which the Holy Spirit works in us, we desire that others may partake of the same spiritual benefits. Hence the Apostles usually begin their Epistles with these good wishes which are not mere wishes, but earnest prayers and Inspired benedictions. May we breathe such petitions wherever we go! Let us wish no man any ill, even in the most exciting and trying times, and under the greatest provocation, but let us still breathe out this prayer, "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied."

3. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was necessary for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints.* These godly men, though they wrote under Divine Inspiration, yet stirred themselves up that they might be in a right condition of mind and heart. Even though the pen does not, by itself, write, yet it is well that it is not corroded, lest it answer not to the hand that uses it. So Jude says, "I gave all diligence to write unto you." All the diligence of Jude, by itself, could not have written this Epistle! Still, while depending upon Divine guidance, he was no mere passive agent—he gave all diligence to the accomplishment of his task. Jude wrote of "the common salvation," for there is but one. He was writing a general Epistle, a catholic Epistle, to all sorts of persons all over the world and he, therefore, wrote of "the common salvation." There is but one salvation—there cannot be another. There are some who trouble us, as some troubled the Christians in the Apostles' day, by preaching "another Gospel, which is not another," but there is only one salvation. "It was necessary," says the Apostle, "for me to write unto you." And oh, how necessary it still is to preach the Gospel and to warn men against defections from it! Jude continues, "It was necessary for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all" (that is the correct rendering) "delivered to the saints." The faith is not a *growth.* It is not an *evolution.* It was once for all delivered to the saints and the great business of the saints, the holy, the saintly among men, is to defend, if necessary with their lives, the faith once delivered unto them! We are put in trust with the Gospel, we are trustees of a Divine deposit of invaluable Truth. And we must be true to our trust at all costs. It was necessary for Jude to write as he did, for he had further to say—

4. *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the Grace of our God*

into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. These are two vital points in which many have erred—either separating holiness of life from orthodoxy of belief—or denying the Divinity and the supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing could more discredit the Gospel than the first error, that of turning the Grace of God into lasciviousness. And nothing could more injure the Gospel than the second error, that of "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.* So you may get in among the spiritual children of Israel, you may share their privileges, you may sing the Red Sea song of triumph and yet, after all, if there is not *real* living faith within your soul, God will as surely destroy you as He destroyed the unbelieving Israelites! Those myriads of graves in the wilderness are as sure a token of God's hatred of sin as the drowning of Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen in the Red Sea! Beware, then, of having a form of faith which does not purify your lives, a profession of belief in Christ which allows you to live in sin with impunity, for if you have this, however near you may *seem* to be to the people of God, even if you are counted in with them, yet God will not reckon you as His, for He is the same Lord who "afterward destroyed them that believed not."

6. *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.* The angels—think of how high they stood in their first estate! If sin could drag an angel from the skies, it may well pluck a minister from the pulpit, a deacon from the Communion Table, a Church member out of the midst of his Brothers and Sisters! It is only *perseverance in holiness* which is the token of eternal salvation! If we forsake the Lord and turn back to our former evil ways, it will be the evidence that we never really believed in Christ and that there was no true work of Grace in our hearts.

7. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.* Whatever the new gods, newly come up, that some preach, nowadays, may be or may not be, "our God is a consuming fire," our God is one who takes vengeance upon iniquity and who will by no means spare the guilty! He is as terribly just as He is Divinely gracious—let us bow before Him.

8. *Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.* What a strange thing it is that such evils should spring up in the nominal Church of God! I suppose that out of the professing Church, there have come more monstrous evils than have been nursed in the world, itself! Why, even in these days, we have had those who have professed perfection, who have given themselves over to abominable evils and who have even taught them as a part of their perfection! Ah, me! To what depths of infamy will not men go! Under the very guise of holiness, the most loathsome iniquity has been practiced. Unless the Grace of God prevents, that which is best rots into that which is

worst. You could not make a devil except with an angel for the raw material—a Judas Iscariot could only be produced out of an Apostle of Jesus Christ—and it was into the nominal Church of God that these filthy dreamers of whom Jude wrote had come. They were also, according to the Apostle, those who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," those who quibble at everything that is right and good, and seek to pull down everything that comes to them with authority, especially everything that is of Divine authority.

9. *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you.* I do not know when that happened, yet I believe it, because it is here. When we are called to dispute—whether it is about the Law of God, which might be regarded as the body of Moses, or about the Gospel, which is the body of Christ—let us use no railing accusations, for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. Let us be satisfied with hard arguments and soft words—and when we feel that our own rebuke will be useless, let us simply say, "The Lord rebuke you."

10. *But these speak evil of those things which they know not.* Very generally it is so—those who revile Holy Scripture are usually persons who have not read the Bible. They "speak evil of those things which they know not."

10-12. *But what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots in your feasts of charity.* You seem to be sailing smoothly along over the placid waters, but these men are like hidden rocks—that is the expression used by the Apostle rather than, "spots."

12. *When they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.* At the love feasts in the Apostles' day, these ungodly men feasted without fear, just as some do at the Communion Table now. The absence of holy fear is a damning mark in the souls of unholy professors! That religion which has no awe in it—which never makes us tremble before the Most High—is not the religion of genuine faith, for there is a fear which even perfect love casts not out, but it rather increases and deepens that holy fear which is the very essence of true piety.

12, 13. *Clouds they are without water, carried about by winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.* Such were in the professing Church in Jude's time, so we must not be surprised if we meet with men like them in the nominal Church today!

14, 15. *And Enoch, also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.* When Enoch thus prophesied, we do not know. That he did so was re-

vealed to Jude and he, here, tells us of it. It was profitable for us that so pointed and plain a testimony of Enoch should not be lost.

16-18. *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, Beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.* Jude gives a summary of warnings uttered by Paul, Peter and James.

19. *These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.* They know nothing of the Divine Life and of that Divine Spirit who dwells in the bodies of the saints as in a holy temple.

20. *But you, Beloved, building*—Is this the way, then, to prevent our falling into sin? Yes. To prevent doing wrong, do right—"You, Beloved, building"—doing good, substantial, solid work, building—

20. *Up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit!* He has told us about the one Foundation, now he bids us build thereon—"Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." "Praying." That is the next thing. There is no preservation like that which is given by God in response to believing prayer. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." There is a kind of praying which is without the Holy Spirit—and it speeds not. There is a praying which is the breath of God in man, returning from where it came—this will keep us from falling and bring us untold blessings

21. *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* While you thus carefully watch over yourselves, have great love, also, to others, and seek to bless them, especially your fellow Church members.

22. *And of some have compassion, making a difference.* They may all, apparently, sin in much the same way, but there may be circumstances that make a difference between them. There may not be the same willfulness, or the same continuance in the sin in some as there is in others—there may be, in some cases, *greater* temptation and, therefore, more excuse for them. "Of some have compassion, making a difference."

23. *And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.* Loving the sinners, but hating their sin.

24, 25. *Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.*

The Lord bless the reading of His Word to our profit! 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.

DESPISED LIGHT WITHDRAWN
NO. 2413

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 19, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 15, 1887.

"While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them."
John 12:36.

OUR Savior was very gentle with those who had real difficulties. He would argue with them over and over again. He would state a Truth of God, and re-state it. He would cast it into the form of a parable, or He would condense it into a sentence comparable to a proverb, or He would enlarge and expand it, for He was gentle with seeking souls as a nurse is with her child. I do not believe that there is any real difficulty in the hearts of those of you who are sincerely seeking Jesus that He will despise. He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed and, therefore, come to Him with your doubts and your anxieties, believing that His tender heart so loves you and so desires your good, that He will sit at your feet that He may induce you to sit at His feet—He will come down to your level that He may lift you up to His level!

I notice, however, that, while it is true that our gracious Master was very gentle and patient with those who had real difficulties, yet He did not always answer everybody's objection. When the difficulty was raised for the sake of questioning and disputing, when it was mere quibbling, when the enquirers were not in earnest and did not really wish to know the Truth of God, He often declined to answer them. My Master has no desire to be merely victor in a debate—He did not come into the world to fight a battle of logic just for the sake of winning it. It is you and your *salvation* that He is seeking!

So was it in the case of these Jews—when they came with fresh objections, saying, "Who is this Son of Man?" our Lord, instead of replying to them, exhorted them to believe and walk in the light while they had it. He assumed that He was the Light—He took that as a thing which had been proven—He did not go over that ground, again, but He let the quibblers know that He claimed to be the Light of Life, the Light of God whereby men can come to God. And He pressed them to cease from questioning and to begin to practice real and true dealing with Himself. "While you have light," He said, "believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."

I am not going, on this occasion, to attempt to meet any difficulties, or to answer any questions. The most of you have no difficulties about the way of salvation and many whom I address, here, have done with asking questions about Christ. The point is, how to come to a practical decision.

Spirit of the Living God, make this the day and this the hour when many shall believe in the great Light of God, and shall be made the children of Light once and for all!

I. First of all, I shall call your attention to a very solemn matter which may be described as THE THREATENED END TO A TIME OF PRIVILEGE—"*while* you have the light." You have no freehold possession of it. You have the light, but the time of light will come to an end. Observe the 35th verse, "Yet a little while is the light with you." You have it at present, but it will soon be gone from you. Take heed lest it be gone before you have used it, for when it has once been withdrawn, darkness will come upon you and, "He that walks in darkness knows not where he goes."

Now what was this light of which our Lord thus spoke? To the Jews, it was the *light of the Presence of Christ*. It was a great privilege, indeed, for the people living in that age and in that country to have the Son of God among them bodily. John tells us that there were some few who beheld His Glory, "the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth," but the vast multitude were so blinded that, with God, Himself, in their midst in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, they did not perceive who the illustrious Stranger was! He came and He went away, again, and they knew not who it was that they had rejected, "for," as Paul said in writing to the Corinthians, "had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." That was the Light of God that the Jews had—and which they lost.

Christ has never personally come to you, dear Friends, in the flesh, but *the light of His Gospel is still with you*, and in a sense, that is His Presence, for Jesus is the very Life of the Gospel. There is also a light that comes to some men, I might even say in human form, for there are some ministers whom God specially appoints as His representatives to bless others. I cannot help looking back in history to such men as Whitefield and Wesley and their companions in that great revival period. It was a time of bright light while they were among the sons of men! They flew like flaming seraphs over this land, leaving a trail of light behind them which banished much of the darkness in which England had been shrouded. It was a great privilege to have heard those men and, when they were gone, to a large extent, and to many people, the Light of God went with them." There are some preachers still on the earth whom God blesses very greatly in the conversion of souls, men whom you cannot hear without being profited in your souls.

Without exalting anybody or depreciating anybody, it is a fact that there are some preachers who do not touch your heart and do not stir your spirit—they may be very useful to others and useful in other directions—but they are not of service to *you*. On the other hand, there are those whom God does bless to your soul and if you find anywhere, in this Tabernacle, or in any other House of Prayer where Christ is preached, a voice that really moves you, it is, so to speak, a manifestation of the Light of God to you. Do not, I beseech you, play with it, or trifle with it, for whoever the preacher may be, however humble the instrumentality, if it is instrumentality that is adapted to your case, it should be honored in your conscience and it should be highly regarded in your heart! That light may readily enough be quenched. The preacher and his hearers

may be separated. He may be taken from you, or you may be taken from him. In either case, it may be a very sorrowful experience for you to have to look back upon all you heard and saw in those days when there was an instrumentality exactly suited to your case and yet you refused to be moved by it.

We have always with us the Gospel of Jesus Christ that you can read in this Book whenever you will, but *the Holy Spirit must go with the Gospel* to make it the power of God unto salvation! You cannot see the Light that is in the Word unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to you. Some of you have been under the influence of the Holy Spirit in some measure and degree. There have been times when you have seen sin and have stood aghast at it, when you have seen the Savior, and have admired His blood and righteousness. There have been times when you have been strangely inclined to come away from yourself and your sin, and to come to Jesus and be saved, You remember those powerful drawings, those inward strivings. Remember that this work of the Holy Spirit is but for a time, it lasts not forever. Those solemn words are still true, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." A day may come when the same preaching that now greatly stirs you, will have no influence over you—and when the Spirit of God, Himself, will seem to be entirely absent, both from the means of Grace and from the Bible when you read it. Therefore I put before you this serious consideration, that you are at present favored with the Light of God, but you are only favored with it for a certain term.

Do not reckon upon always having it, for *the Light may be removed from you*. My dear Hearer, the day may come when you will have to go away from this country and be found far off in the bush of Australia, or the backwoods of America. Or you may even, in this country, be located where you will not be able to hear the Gospel, for what you will hear will not be the Gospel, and you will be obliged to confess that it is not! Therefore, while you have the Light of God, remember that it is a favorable season for your decision for Christ. The day may come, as I said before, when the voice that has thrilled you, again and again, and that wakes the echoes of your soul's most secret chambers, shall be silent in death. The time may come when, although your minister and you, yourself, are still left in the same place, yet, so far as *you* are concerned, the Holy Spirit will be gone, and so the Light will have departed from you.

Take heed, I beseech you, lest it really be so, and *use the Light while you have it*. It may, perhaps, seem to some of you that I am raising a needless alarm, but, indeed, it is not so. I do not think that, for many a day, I have come to this platform to speak to you without being informed, during the day, of some one or two who have passed into eternity out of this congregation. Years ago the bulk of us, as Church members, were young, and we lost comparatively few by the stroke of death. But, as it is with the pastor, so is it with the people—we are all getting older. We have entered middle life, the great mass of us, and, consequently, our mortality is largely increasing—and every time we meet we may be positively certain that we shall never, all of us, meet again here!

Between this Sabbath and next Sabbath some in the ranks of our membership will have passed into Heaven—and some out of our congregation will have been called to stand before God. I feel, therefore, like the

guard of a train that is just ready to start. The time is up for us to be off and the guard's whistle has been blown, but there is somebody who wants to talk to me about politics, or there is another person who wants to discuss a theological difficulty, and I feel bound to say, "Sir, the time is up. We must start at once—will you come on board, or must you be left behind? While the train is here at the platform, enter it, take your place, and journey with us to Zion, for now it is time for us to go! We cannot stop here forever." Time and tide wait for no man! Neither will God forever wait for men to turn unto Him and live—the hour shall come when all opportunities will be past—when the gate of mercy will be finally shut. You remember how it was with the wise virgins and the bridegroom, "they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

God bless that Word of warning! He can bless it, however feebly it may have been spoken!

II. Now, secondly, I take you a little further into our theme. Here is AN ACT OF GRACE COMMENDED—"While you have the light, *believe in the light*." This *believing* is the most essential act of a man's life! Therefore our Lord said, "Believe in the light."

First, believe that it is the true Light of God, believe the Gospel to be of God! Many here have proven in their own experience that it is of God and that, "it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world and was made Man. That as Man He took upon Himself the sin of His people and suffered for us, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," is most assuredly true! And, that in His name there is salvation, that in Him we have eternal life is, also, equally true. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," even now. Believe this to be true.

"Well, I do believe it to be true," says one, "but I am not saved for all that." Then, next, I pray the Holy Spirit to help you to go a little further. Not only believe the Gospel to be of God, but *believe Jesus Christ, Himself*. There is a text that is often misquoted—I have many a time heard it said, "I know *in whom* I have believed," but Paul wrote, "I know whom I have believed." He had not only believed in Christ, but he had *believed* Christ! I want you, dear Friend, if you are sincerely seeking salvation, to believe Christ. Believe Him to be what He says He is—believe that everything He says is true—believe that He, Himself, does save, and can save, and will save you! So believe Him as to hand yourself over to Him and take Him to be your Savior! In a word, as our text says, "while you have light, believe in the light."

It is essential, also, that you should *believe for yourselves*. It is no use for people to try to believe the Gospel for their friends or for their children. Believe it for yourselves! I notice that some unsaved persons will read with great interest accounts of conversions and even feel pleasure in hearing of this and that man being saved. My dear Friend, why not believe Christ *yourself*? Why not take Him to be your own Savior? Remember that it is true to you that, "He that believes in the Son has everlasting life." May you be led at this moment to make it true to yourself! You stand in a banqueting-hall tonight—the tables are delightfully spread with every kind of food that your hunger can crave and every drink that

is suitable to quench your thirst—you have been up and down those table—and admired the generosity of Him that furnished them so liberally. And you have rejoiced as you have seen *others* sit down and feast!

Now I want you to do this. There is the chair for you. What is next? Sit down at the table and begin to feast. It is you, yourself, who will find the Gospel true! It is your own personal participation in this feast that shall be to you, your joy and your salvation! You do not simply need a Savior—knock that little letter "a" out and put in the blessed pronoun, "my," and say from your heart, "my Savior!" Do not merely say, "I believe that there is pardon for sin"—take Christ to be your own Savior and then you are pardoned—your sin is gone! All that is said in the Word of God to sinners in general is meant for each sinner in particular when he comes and takes it to himself by his own individual faith. There is a passage in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where he says—"These are the generals; come to particulars, Man." That is just what I want to say to you! All that you have heard, all that we have preached, may be put down as generals. But if it is to benefit you, you must come to *particulars*, you must personally appropriate the general Truth of God and say, "This is for me. This I believe. This I will take. This Savior is mine."

"Still," says one, "suppose that I should take what was *not* mine." That is a supposition which every honest man might fairly suggest, but, in this case, so free is the Gospel that you may freely take it and there will be no question about whether you had a right to it. Look, there is a hungry dog! He rushes into a butcher's shop, jumps up, steals a piece of meat and runs off with it. It is hardly worth the butcher's while to run after him, to take it away, but if the dog has actually eaten the meat, then I am sure that no sensible butcher will even think of taking it away from him. Now, I would advise you to make a snatch at the Gospel and hungrily devour it by a ravenous faith—and I am sure that no one will ever take it away from you! Have you ever read that promise of our Lord, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? I see the Savior standing there and His different disciples come to Him, one after another, and He does not put one of them away from Him!

At last there comes a filthy beggar, leprous as snow—the white scales are on his brow and men flee in terror from him! He comes right up to the Christ and tries to get into His arms. Will He not push Him away? No, for He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," and He embraces this filthy, leprous beggar and, wonder of wonders, as He presses Him to His breast, the leprosy is healed, the filth is all gone and His rags are transformed to shining raiment! Wonders of Grace belong to Christ! Come along with you, then, and try Him for yourselves! Did He not Himself say, "While you have light, believe in the light"? If you dare to believe in that Light, you shall make no sort of mistake, for Jesus, Himself, bids you to do so!

Very often, at the bottom of our unbelief, there lies this thought, "I am, after all, somebody of importance." It is the old story of Naaman all over again. He went to the house of Elisha, we are told, "with his horses and with his chariot." That equipage was a very important part of the real Naaman—his horses and his chariot went to show that he was a great man with his master and he would have Elisha to know that he was a

great man and honorable, albeit that he was a leper. Such a great man, when he goes to the Prophet's door, down that narrow street in the city of Samaria, must still have his horses and his chariot! The coachman thought he never would get down that lane but Naaman said, "You must drive right up to the door. I must go with my horses and with my chariot." The man of God was indoors and Elisha knew how to treat the proud warrior—he did not even go out to him—he sent a message to him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come, again, to you, and you shall be clean."

Naaman thought that Elisha should have come out to him! He said, "I thought, he will surely come out to me; the proudest man in all Syria has been glad to unloose the laces of my shoes! Did I not come to the Prophet's door with my horses and my chariot? Yet he sent out a bit of a boy, or a servant girl, with a message to me! Then, besides, he tells me to wash! Does he think that I do not wash? I, a prince of Syria, need washing? And if I needed washing, must I come all the way to Jordan to wash in that paltry stream? No, there are Abana and Pharpar, back there at Damascus, the rivers of my very respectable country—may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." Yet you know that when he came to a proper state of mind, he did as the Prophet bade him—he washed seven times in Jordan and his leprosy was cleansed. Thus, proud sinner, obey the Gospel command, "Believe and live," and you, too, shall be made whole!

III. I want you, now, to advance another step. I have almost anticipated this third point—"While you have light, believe in the light, *that you may be the children of light*." Here is A RESULT OF FAITH MENTIONED.

They who believe in Christ receive *a change of nature*. They were born heirs of wrath, but, by Grace they become children of the Light of God. "You were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord," as soon as you have believed in Jesus Christ! This new birth, this regeneration, is a great puzzle to many poor sinners. One asks, "How can I make myself a new creature in Christ?" Of course, *you* can do nothing of the kind! This is a miracle—it is as much a work of God to make us children of light as it was to make light in the first place! Only God can work this miracle, but mark you this, there never was a soul, yet, that truly believed in Christ, but at the same time it underwent the change called the new birth or regeneration. Christians have often been asked about which is first, faith or regeneration, belief in Christ or being born again. I will tell you, when you answer me this question—When a wheel moves, which spoke moves first? "Oh, they all start together!" you say. So these other things all start together, whether it is the hub of the wheel, which is regeneration, or the spokes of the wheel, which are faith, repentance, hope, love and so on—when the wheel moves, it all moves at once!

If you believe in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in the moment that you believe, this great change of nature is effected in you, for *faith has, in itself, a singularly transforming power*. It is a fact in everyday experience that when a man comes to believe in his employer, he becomes, at once, a better employee. A person whom I disliked, because I suspected him, becomes, at once, pleasing to me as soon as I trust him. So, faith to-

wards God, in itself, produces a total change of mind in the man who has it.

But, beside that, there goes with faith a *Divine energy which changes the heart of man*. I have heard of an old sinner who had been in prison many a day, growing gray in his iniquity, who took a little child up in his arms, and, as he put his hand upon the boy's curly head, he said, "There would be some hope for me if I could become like this little child." Now, that is exactly what God can do for you! If you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall receive a new and childlike nature. There shall be created in you something better than what is called the primitive innocence of infancy—it shall be a really pure and holy life that shall be given to you and you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Is not this very wonderful? The text says, "Believe in the light, that you may be the children of light." The children of light—what a wonderful picture that might be if I were an artist and could exercise the power of word painting which some have! "The children of light." Why, in the morning, when the sun first shines forth, those myriads of dew-drops, all brighter than diamonds of the first water—these are the children of light! And those innumerable flowers that open their cups and sweeten the air with their dainty perfume—these are the children of light! And those birds that have been slumbering away, there, during the night, in their hidden corners in the grove, come out and begin at once their charming minstrelsy, for they are the children of the light! I cannot tell you how many and how bright are these things in nature which are the children of light, but God can make us, by His Grace, to be like these things, only far better, children of light *spiritually*.

What are the children of light spiritually? Well, I have met with some of them and it has been a great joy to know them, for these children of light have *a great delight in the Truth of God*. They are not afraid of it, they love to dive into it! As children of light they like to know, they *wish* to know, even the deep things of God. They do not shut their eyes to the Truth of God about eternity. They do not refuse to search their own hearts. They are children of the Light of God and they desire the Light of God to shine! They come to the Light of God that their hearts, their thoughts and their works may be made manifest. They delight to know the Truth of God—error and falsehood are loathsome to them—but that which is true is charming to their judgment.

"Children of light." They are those *who move in a world of knowledge*. They have come to know what others do not know. To them the world is peopled with invisible beings! To them eternal things are no dreams, but they have become realities. Their eyes have been opened to a Light that shines not from the sun and they move in an atmosphere in which they behold things which the telescope cannot reveal. They are children of the Light of God who have come into a world of perception and discoveries to which others are strangers!

"Children of light." I will tell you, again, how you may know them. *They practice truth*. They speak the truth. It is said that an ambassador is a gentleman who is sent abroad to lie for the good of his country. I suppose that common saying is so nearly true that we need not correct it. And a politician is often a gentleman who has learned the art of con-

cealing his thoughts, or who expresses opinions which he trusts will be in accordance with those of his constituency! A child of God is a man who says what he believes, let the world believe it or not! He does not understand, "policy." He is no mariner who trims his sail to every shifting wind but, believing in the difference between right and wrong, he chooses the right and eschews the wrong, for he is a child of the Light of God! He has made up his mind to follow the right, the true, the good and the gracious at all costs. Now, that is what faith in Christ will do for you. It will make you, by the good Spirit of God, to be a child of light!

A child of light, further, *is one who exhibits the mind and character of God*. He is not an earthworm, hiding himself away in the mold. He is not a rat which loves to be behind the wainscot except at nighttime—he is a child of light. He wears his heart upon his sleeve where birds may peck at it and they will do so, but that will not affect him. It is not for him to conceal anything—what has he to conceal? He lives in the sight of the eternal God and, as for how he appears in the sight of men, what is that to him? Such an one condemns me, but God acquits me, so let the other condemn if he will, what does it matter to me? Such a man acquits and applauds me, but if God condemns me, the acquittal of man is less than nothing and vanity! A child of light should be very bold for his Lord.

You remember that the times were horribly dark in the days when William Farel lived in Switzerland and young John Calvin had written his weighty volumes of treatises called the *Institutes*. They were the product of his early days and he wrote in a flowing style, either in French or Latin, and he thought, if he wrote books and sent them forth, he would have done his part towards the Reformation. But Farel discovered this young writer and said to him, "You must take up the work of the Reformers and carry it on by preaching the Truth." Calvin replied, "I am a bookish man, I have not the courage and the strength to stand out in the front of the battle—that is for men like Martin Luther. I am a studious person and not so much a man of action."

Farel reasoned with him and said, "You must come out and take the lead in this Reformation fight," and he asked him, "Are you afraid of losing your life?" Calvin protested that he had no such fear, he would willingly lay down his life for Jesus Christ if that were necessary, but he shrank from the tumult of controversy." Then Farel pronounced upon him a curse so terrible, if he did not immediately come and take his proper place, that John Calvin had to yield and he never doubted afterwards, but was always to the front, and always the bravest of the brave! I have often admired the noble veteran, Farel, who could not tolerate that this young man, with so much in him, should simply hold the pen and keep in the background, but threatened that the Lord would follow him with all the vials of His vengeance if he did not take his place at the post of duty. I should like now, if I could, to put my hand upon the shoulder of some young Brother, and call upon him to come out to serve his Lord. I feel myself, tonight, like an Elijah to you—and I charge you, Elisha, quit the cattle and betake yourself to this prophetic ministry! God calls you to it and woe be to you if you stay back from it!

Again, a child of light is one who, by God's Grace, is *bright, happy, restful, full of joy, life, fruitfulness*. These are the children of the Light of

God and if we believe in Christ, who is the Light of God, and take Him to ourselves with all our hearts, then we shall be the children of Light. I pray that some of you may become the children of Light even tonight. O God, work miracles of mercy in this house! Jehovah, true God, when You answer by fire, then are You known to be God and the priests of Baal flee away. If you will convert men by Your own Omnipotent Grace, they will worship and adore You. If You will not do this, what can my voice do? Pray, O you people of God, that He may bring those who have His Light to believe in the Light and to become the children of Light! These people to whom Christ spoke were bigoted persecuting Jews, yet He said, even to them, "Believe in the light, that you may be the children of light." Whoever may be in my congregation tonight—and doubtless there is a mixed medley here—there are none within these walls whom the power of Divine Grace cannot at this moment save! Our Lord Jesus Christ is as able to save the most abandoned as the most moral and to bring to Himself the most skeptical as well as the most credulous! May that miracle be worked in our midst by His great Grace!

IV. My last point is, A GRIEVOUS CLOSE TO A SERMON.

Christ Himself was the Preacher on this occasion—do you, therefore, infer that these people believed? Let me read to you what happened when the sermon was done. They gathered about that extempore pulpit from which Jesus had addressed them, but, all of a sudden, they could scarcely tell how, He was gone! They said one to another, "Where is He?" According to the latter part of our text, this happened at the close of Christ's sermon—"*These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.*" So, although He had preached as never man preached, though His very soul had run over at His lips in a mighty cascade of love, yet His hearers were not converted, but the Divine Preacher had to go and hide Himself from their malicious violence! The preacher, on this occasion, will not have to do that. No one will seek his life, or try to do him injury, but it is a sad reflection that the same *result* may follow as followed from Christ's own preaching. Men may go their way with their eyes blinded and the question of Isaiah may have to be repeated again and again, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Do you blame Jesus because these people rejected His testimony? Do you blame Jesus because He had to escape from their violence? No, no, no—a thousand times, no! And "in that day," in that last dread Day of Judgment, I trust that you will exonerate me from all blame if you are lost, for I have earnestly exhorted you to believe in Jesus, and in Jesus only! There is salvation to be had in Him—will you have it, or will you not? I would gladly grip your hand, to detain you, as that "ancient mariner," of whom Coleridge tells us in his weird poem, transfixed with his glittering eyes the wedding guest, and held him when he wanted to be gone, and I would pray you to remember that tonight may be the turning point, the deciding hour, of your eternal destiny! The scales, I see, are quivering—which way shall they turn? O blessed Christ, cast Your Cross in the balance and turn it, tonight, for the salvation of each one before You, and unto Your name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:20-50.

Verses 20-24. Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." I think that our Savior looked upon these Greeks as a sort of vanguard of the great army of Gentiles who would come to Him as the result of His death, but He fixed His eyes upon the *cause* rather than the result, and so He began to talk about that death of His, and how it was that it would work such glorious results. If you want a corn of wheat to grow, you must put it into the ground. It must be resolved into its primary particles—for that is what, "to die," means—and then it must spring up, again, with newness of life, or else it can never be multiplied. It was so with the Lord Jesus, Himself. It is still so with us, it is in proportion as we, ourselves, shall be prepared to die that we shall be prepared to give life to others.

25. *He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* To hoard your energies will be really to destroy them, like hoarded wheat which, in the end, becomes useless. But to give up your energies, to expend your life forces—this is to sow the wheat—and this is the way to ensure the harvest.

26. *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.* Do not let him invent some new method of service—"Let him follow Me." If you would do Christ a service, it cannot be by will-worship, or by any way of your own devising! "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

26. *And where I am, there shall also My servant be.* "He shall be with Me in tribulation. He shall be with Me in humiliation—and he shall ultimately be with Me in triumph and in Glory."

26. *If anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor.* Those servants of Christ who follow at their Master's heel and do His bidding at all times, are the true knights of the King who win the honors that God alone can give.

27. *Now is My soul troubled and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this cause came I unto this hour.* Often, my Brothers and Sisters, should we be checked in prayer if we would be as wise as our Lord. "What shall I say? Shall I ask to be delivered from sickness? Shall I ask that I may not endure the troubles which are the common lot of men? Shall I pray to be screened from persecution?" You see, I am rendering our Lord's question into our language, bringing it down from the lofty height of His Divine thoughts to the level of our poor humanity! We must often pause before we pray, and say with our Lord, "For this cause came I unto this hour. Have I not been brought here on purpose to suffer? Have I not been led to this place that I may glorify God by submitting to all His will?" Therefore, sometimes let us check ourselves in prayer lest

we should ask what is not for our own good or for God's Glory. The next word of the Savior will give us liberty enough, for He went on to say—

28. *Father, glorify Your name.* When we are pleading about that glorious name of Jehovah, we may pray with vehemence and importunity—"Father, whatever I do or suffer, glorify Your name."

28, 29. *Then came there a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him.* Ah, they did not understand the voice of God, or the cause of the voice speaking to them. If the men of the world in our Savior's day did not understand the Father's voice to the Only-Begotten, do not expect that the men of the world, today, will understand the Divine voice in your heart. They will reckon that you are in error and that God has not spoken to you—it has only thundered. They will be ready to invent all kinds of stories of angels and I know not what, so as to get rid of the voice of God to you. But you know it—if you are God's children, you know His voice and you also know what He means when He speaks!

30-32. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.* This is the sermon which has the Greeks for a text. They are already coming, being drawn to Christ, but when He dies, when He is lifted up upon the Cross, instead of losing His attractive power, He will have greater drawing force than ever—"I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

33, 34. *This He said, signifying what death He should die. The people answered Him.* As they were always doing, capaciously answering—not answering Him with sentiments that responded to His, but replying against Him with their caviling.

34-41. *We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how can say You, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up?' Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, 'He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.' These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, and spoke of Him.* It is an awful thing to resist the Spirit of God, for if His softening influences are withdrawn, the heart grows hard! If His enlightening influences are taken away, the eyes of the understanding are darkened! I believe there are many who have so long trifled with conscience and violated the best instincts of their nature that they are given up as those who are past hope. I pray God that it may not be so with any here. But it was so with many in the generation among which Christ labored.

42. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him.* Christ has His secret followers in the darkest days. There are men who believe in Him even when the current of infidelity runs most strongly.

42, 43. *But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* For which they deserved great censure! Yet some of them cast away their cowardice at the last, for Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus were among those who confessed their love to the Crucified Christ.

44-49. *Jesus cried and said, He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that sees Me sees Him that sent Me. I am come a Light into the world, that whoever believes on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hears My word, and believes not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has that which judges him—the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me. He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.* Christ did not pride Himself upon being a great original thinker. He took His words from His Father's mouth—and the preacher of the Gospel is to be no inventor of new thoughts. The "thoughtful" man of whom we hear so much is just a man who is rebellious against God. The Lord's true servant is to repeat God's thoughts, not his own—to borrow from the Scriptures, to borrow from the teaching of the Holy Spirit—even as the Lord Jesus Christ did.

50. *And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.* If the great Head of the Church was thus only a Messenger, the Deliverer of a message from the Father, should not we, who at our best are such poor ministers of Christ, take heed to it that we, also, can say, "Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak"? God grant it! 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.

THE PRODIGAL'S CLIMAX
NO. 2414

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 26, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 19, 1887.

"When he came to himself."
Luke 15:17.

THERE are different stages in the sinner's history and they are worth marking in the prodigal's experience. There is, first, the stage in which the young man sought independence from his father. The younger son said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." We know something of that state of mind and, alas, it is a very common one! As yet there is no open profligacy, no distinct rebellion against God. Religious services are attended, the father's God is held in reverence, but in his heart the young man desires a supposed liberty—he wishes to cast off from all restraint. Companions hint that he is too much tied to his mother's apron string. He, himself, feels that there may be some strange delights which he has never enjoyed and the curiosity of Mother Eve to taste the fruit of that tree which was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, comes into the young man's mind—and he wishes to reach out his hand and take the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, that he may eat thereof. He never *intends* to spend his substance in riotous living, but he would like to have the opportunity of spending it as he likes. He does not *mean* to be a profligate, still, he would like to have the honor of choosing what is right on his own account. At any rate, he is a man, now—he feels his blushing honors full upon him and he wants, now, to exercise his own freedom of will and to feel that he, himself, is really his own master! Who, indeed, he asks, is Lord over him?

Perhaps there are some to whom I am speaking who are just in such a state as that—if so, may the Grace of God arrest you before you go any further away from Him! May you feel that to be out of gear with God—to wish to be separated from Him and to have other interests than those of Him who made you—must be dangerous and probably will be fatal! Therefore, now, even now, may you come to yourself at this earliest stage of your history and also come to love and rejoice in God as the prodigal returned to his father!

Very soon, however, this young man in the parable entered upon quite another stage. He had received his portion of goods—all that he would have had at his father's death he had turned into ready money—and there it was. It is his own and he may do what he pleases with it. Having already indulged his independent feeling towards his father and his wish

to have a separate establishment altogether from him, he knew that he would be freer to carry out his plans if he did so right away. Anywhere near his father there is a check upon him—he feels that the influence of his home somewhat clips his wings. If he could get into a far country, *there* he would have the opportunity to develop—and all that evolution could do for him, he would have the opportunity of enjoying—so he gathers all together and goes into the far country.

It may be that I am addressing some who have reached that stage. Now there is all the delirium of self-indulgence. Now it is all gaiety, "a short life and a merry one," forgetting the long eternity and a woeful one! Now the cup is full and the red wine sparkles in the bowl. As yet, it has not bitten you like a serpent, nor stung you like an adder, as it will do all too soon—just now it is the deadly sweetness that you taste and the exhilaration of that drugged chalice that deceives you. You are making haste to enjoy yourself! Sin is a dangerous joy, beloved all the more because of the danger, for, where there is a fearful risk, there is often an intense pleasure to a daring heart and you, perhaps, are one of that venturous band, spending your days in folly and your nights in righteousness.

Before long there comes a third stage to the sinner as well as to the prodigal—that is when he has, "spent all." We have only a certain amount of spending money, after all. He who has *gold* without limit, yet has not *health* without limit! Or if health does not fail him in his sinning, yet *desire* fails and satiety comes in as it did with Solomon when he tried this way of seeking happiness. At last there is no honey left, there is only the sting of the bee! At last there is no sweetness in the cup, there is only the delirium that follows the intoxication! At last the meat is eaten to the bone and there is nothing good to come out of that bone—it contains no marrow, the teeth are broken with it—and the man wishes that he had never sat down to so terrible a feast! He has reached the stage at which the prodigal arrived when he had spent all. Oh, there are some who spend all their character, spend all their health and strength, spend all their hope, spend all their uprightness, spend *everything* that was worth having! They have spent all! This is another stage in the sinner's history and it is very apt to lead to despair, deeper sin and, sometimes, to that worst of sins which drives a man red-handed before the bar of his Maker to account for his own blood!

It is a dreadful state to be in, for there comes at the back of it a terrible hunger. There is a weary labor to get something that may stay the spirit, a descending to the degradation of feeding swine, a willingness to eat of the husks that swine eat, yet an inability to do so! Many have felt this craving that cannot be satisfied. But, for my part, I am glad when "the rake's progress" has reached this point, for often, in the Grace of God, it is the way home for the prodigal! It is a roundabout way, but it is the way home for him! When men have spent all and poverty has followed on their recklessness—and sickness has come at the call of their vice—then it is that Omnipotent Grace has stepped in—and there has come another stage in the sinner's history of which I am now going to

speak, as God may help me. That is the point the prodigal had reached, "when he came to himself."

I. Then, first, A SINNER IS BESIDE HIMSELF.

While a man is living in his sin, he is out of his mind, he is beside himself. I am sure that it is so. There is nothing more like madness than sin and it is a moot point among those who study deep problems, how far insanity and the tendency to sin go side by side, and whereabouts it is that great sin and entire loss of responsibility may touch each other. I do not intend to discuss that question at all, but I am going to say that every sinner is morally and responsibly insane and, therefore, in a worse condition than if he were only mentally insane.

He is insane, first, *because his judgment is altogether out of order*. He makes fatal mistakes about all-important matters. He reckons a short time of this mortal life to be worth all his thoughts and he puts eternity into the background. He considers it possible for a creature to be at enmity against the Creator, or indifferent to Him, and yet to be happy! He fancies that he knows better what is right for him than the Law of God declares. He dreams that the everlasting Gospel, which cost God the life of His own Son, is scarcely worthy of his attention at all, and he passes it by with contempt. He has unshipped the rudder of his judgment and steers towards the rocks with awful deliberation—and seems as if he would wish to know where he can find the surest place to commit eternal shipwreck! His judgment is out of order.

Further, *his actions are those of a madman*. This prodigal son, first of all, had interests apart from his father. He must have been mad to have conceived such an idea as that! For me to have interests apart from Him who made me and keeps me alive—for me, the creature of an hour, to fancy that I can have a will in opposition to the will of God, and that I can so live and prosper—why, I must be a fool! I must be mad to wish any such thing, for it is consistent with the highest reason to believe that he who yields himself up to Omnipotent Goodness must be in the track of happiness, but that he who sets himself against the Almighty Grace of God must certainly be kicking against the pricks to his own wounding and hurt! Yet this sinner does not see that it is so and the reason is that he is beside himself.

Then, next, that young man went away from his home, though it was the best home in all the world. We can judge that from the exceeding tenderness and generosity of the father at the head of it and from the wonderful way in which all the servants had such entire sympathy with their master. It was a happy home—well stored with all that the son could need—yet he quits it to go, he knows not where, among strangers who did not care a straw for him and who, when they had drained his purse, would not give him even a penny with which to buy bread to save him from starving! The prodigal must have been mad to act like that—and for any of *us* to leave Him who has been the dwelling place of His saints in all generations, to quit the warmth and comfort of the Church of God which is the home of joy and peace—is clear insanity! Anyone who does this is acting against his own best interests—he is choosing the

path of shame and sorrow, he is casting away all true delight—*he must be mad.*

You can see that this young man is out of his mind because, when he gets into the far country, he begins spending his money riotously. He does not lay it out judiciously. He spends his money for that which is not bread and his labor for that which satisfies not—and that is just what the sinner does. If he is self-righteous, he is trying to weave a robe out of the worthless material of his own works. And if he is a voluptuary, given up to sinful indulgence, what vanity it is for him to hope for pleasure in the midst of sin! Should I expect to meet with angels in the sewers? With heavenly light in a dark mine? No, these are not places for such things as those, and can I rationally look for joy to my heart from reveling, chambering, wantonness and such conduct? If I do, I must be mad! Oh, if men were but rational—and they often wrongly suppose that they are—if they were but rational beings, they would see how irrational it is to sin! The most reasonable thing in the world is to spend life for its own true design and not to fling it away as though it were a pebble on the seashore.

Further, the prodigal was a fool, he was mad, for he spent all. He did not even stop half-way on the road to penury, but he went on till he had spent all! There is no limit to those who have started in a course of sin. He that stays back from it, by God's Grace, may keep from it, but it is with sin as it is with the intoxicating cup. One said to me, the other day, "I can drink much, or I can drink none, but I have not the power to drink a little, for if I begin, I cannot stop myself, and may go to any length." So is it with sin, God's Grace can keep you abstaining from sin, but, if you begin sinning, oh, how one sin draws on another! One sin is the decoy or magnet for another sin, and draws it on, and one cannot tell, when he begins to descend this slippery slide, how quickly and how far he may go! Thus the prodigal spent all in utter recklessness and, oh, the recklessness of some young sinners whom I know! And, oh, the greater recklessness of some *old* sinners who seem resolved to be damned, for, having but a little remnant of life, left, they waste that last fragment of it in fatal delay!

Then it was, dear Friends, when the prodigal had spent all, that he still further proved his madness! That would have been the time to go home to his father, but, apparently, that thought did not occur to him. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country," still overpowered by the fascination that kept him away from the one place where he might have been happy—and that is one of the worst proofs of the madness of some of you who frequent these courts, that though you know about the great God and His infinite mercy, and know something of how much you need Him and His Grace, yet you still try to get what you need somewhere else and do not go back to Him!

I shall not have time to say much more upon this point, but I must remind you that, like sinners, *the prodigal had the ways of a madman.* I have had, at times, to deal with those whose reason has failed them, and I have noticed that many of them have been perfectly sane, and yet wise and clever, on all points except one. So is it with the inner. He is a fa-

mous politician, just hear him talk! He is a wonderful man of business—see how sharply he looks after every penny! He is very judicious in everything but this—he is mad on one point—he has a fatal monomania, for it concerns his own soul!

A madman will often conceal his madness from those around him—so will a sinner hide his sin. You may talk with this man about morals and you may watch him very closely—yet it may be a long time before you can figure him out and be able to say to him, "One thing you lack." Perhaps, all of a sudden, you touch that weak point, and there he stands, fully developed before you, far gone in his insanity! He is right enough, elsewhere, but with regard to his soul his reason is gone!

Mad people do not know that they have been mad till they are cured—they think that they, alone, are wise, and all the rest are fools. Here is another point of their resemblance to sinners, for they, also, think that everybody is wrong except themselves. Listen how they will abuse a pious wife as "a fool"! What hard words they will use towards a gracious daughter! How they will rail at the ministers of the Gospel and try to tear God's Bible to pieces! Poor mad souls, they think all are mad except themselves! We, with tears, pray God to deliver them from their delusions and to bring them to sit at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in their right minds.

Sometimes the sinner will be seen and known to be mad because he turns on his best friends, as madmen do. Those whom they otherwise would have loved the most, they reckon to be their worst enemies. So God, who is man's best Friend, is most despised, and Christ, who is the Friend of sinners, is rejected, and the most earnest Christians are often the most avoided or persecuted by sinners.

Mad people sometimes, too, will rave, and then you know what dreadful things they will say. So is it with sinners when their fits are on them. I dare not speak of what they will do and what they will say. They often pull themselves up, afterwards, and feel ashamed to think that they should have gone so far. Yet it is so, for they are beside themselves, even as the prodigal was.

I will not dwell longer on this sad fact because I want to speak on the next and brighter part of my theme.

II. Secondly, IT IS A BLESSED THING WHEN THE SINNER COMES TO HIMSELF. "When he came to himself." This is the first mark of Grace working in the sinner as it was the first sign of hope for the prodigal.

Sometimes, *this change occurs suddenly*. I was greatly charmed, this week, by meeting with one to whom this happened. It was an old fashioned sort of conversion with which I was delighted. There came into this building, some three months ago, a man who had not, for a long time, gone to any place of worship. He despised such things. He could swear and drink, and do worse things. He was careless, godless, but he had a mother who often prayed for him, and he had a brother who is, I believe, here, tonight, whose prayer has never ceased for him. He did not come here to worship—he came just to see the preacher whom his brother had been hearing for so many years. But, coming in, somehow he was no sooner in the place than he felt that he was unfit to be here, so he went

up into the top gallery, as far back as he could, and when some friend beckoned him to take a seat, he felt that he could not do so—he must just lean against the wall at the back.

Someone else invited him to sit down, but he would not. He felt that he had no right to do so. And when the preacher announced his text, [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—*A Sermon for the Worst Man on Earth*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]—"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner"—and said something like this, "You that stand farthest off in the Tabernacle and dare not sit down because you feel your guilt to be so great—you are the man to whom God has sent me, this morning—and He bids you come to Christ and find mercy," a miracle of love was worked! Then, "he came to himself," as he will tell us, soon, at the Church meeting when he comes forward to confess his faith. I rejoiced greatly when I heard of it, for in his case there is a change that everybody who knows him can see! He has become full of a desire after *everything* that is gracious as once he practiced everything that was bad! Now that is what *sometimes* happens and why should it not happen, again, tonight? Why should not some other man, or some woman, come to himself or to herself tonight? This is the way home—first to come to yourself—and then to come to your God. "He came to himself."

On the other hand, sometimes *this change is very gradual*. I need not dwell upon that, but there are many who have their eyes opened by degrees. They first see men as trees walking. Afterwards, they see all things clearly. So long as they do but come to themselves, and come to the Savior, I mind not how they come! Some conversions are sudden, some gradual, but in every case, if it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the man comes to himself, it is well.

Now let us consider *how this change happened*. If you should ask me the outward circumstances of the prodigal's case, I would say that it took a great deal to bring him to himself. "Why, surely," one says, "he ought to have come to himself when he had spent all! He must have come to himself when he began to be hungry." No, it took a great deal to bring him to himself, and to his father—and it takes a great deal to bring sinners to themselves and to their God. There are some of you who will have to be beaten with many stripes before you will be saved. I heard one say, who was crushed almost to death in an accident, "If I had not nearly perished, I would have wholly perished." So is it with many sinners—if some had not lost all they had, they would have lost all—but, by strong winds, rough and raging, some are driven into the port of peace.

The occasion of the prodigal's climax was this—he was very hungry, in great sorrow and he was alone. It is a grand thing if we can get people to be alone. There was nobody near the poor man and no sound for him to hear except the grunting of the hogs and their munching of those husks. Ah, to be alone! I wish that we had more opportunities of being alone in this great city, yet, perhaps, the most awful loneliness may be realized while walking a London street! It is a good thing for a sinner, sometimes,

to be alone. The prodigal had nobody to drink with him, nobody to sport with him—he was too far gone for that. He had not a rag to pawn to get another pint—he must, therefore, just sit still without one of his old companions. They only followed him for what they could get out of him. As long as he could treat them, they would treat him well, but when he had spent all, "no man gave unto him." He was left without a comrade in misery he could not allay, in hunger he could not satisfy. He pulled that belt up another notch and made it tighter—but it almost seemed as if he would cut himself in two if he drew it any tighter! He was almost reduced to a skeleton. Emaciation had taken hold of him and he was ready to lie down there and die. Then it was that he came to himself.

Do you know *why this change occurred in the prodigal's case*? I believe that the real reason was that his father was secretly working for him all the while. His state was known to his father. I am sure it was because the elder brother knew it and if the elder brother heard of it, so did the father. The elder brother may have told him, or, if not, the father's greater love would have a readier ear for tidings of his son than the elder brother had. Though the parable cannot tell us—for no parable is meant to teach us *everything*—yet it is true that our Father is Omnipotent and He was secretly touching the core of this young man's heart, and dealing with him by this wondrous surgery of famine and of need to make him, at last, come to himself.

Perhaps somebody here says, "I wish I could come to myself, Sir, without going though all that process." Well, you have come to yourself, already, if you really wish that! Let me suggest to you that in order to prove that it is so, you should begin seriously to *think*—to think about who you are, where you are and what is to become of you. Take time to think, and think in an orderly, steady, serious manner and, if you can, jot down your thoughts. It is a wonderful help to some people to put down upon paper an account of their own condition. I believe that there were many who found the Savior one night when I urged them, when they went home, to write on a piece of paper, "Saved as a Believer in Jesus," or else, "Condemned because I believe not on the Son of God." Some who began to write that word, "condemned," have never finished it, for they found Christ, then and there, while seeking Him! You keep your account books, do you not? I am sure you do if you are in trade, unless you are going to cheat your creditors. You keep your business books—well, now, keep a record concerning your soul! Really look these matters in the face, the hereafter, death—which may come so suddenly—the great eternity, the Judgement Seat. Think about these things! Do not shut your eyes to them. Men and women, I pray you, do not play the fool! If you must play the fool, take some lighter things to trifle with than your souls and your eternal destinies! Shut yourselves up, alone, for a while—go through this matter steadily, lay it out in order, make a plan of it. See where you are going. Think over the way of salvation, the story of the Cross, the love of God, the readiness of Christ to save—and I think that, while this process is going on, you will feel your heart melting—and soon you will find your soul believing in the precious blood which sets the sinner free!

III. I had much more to say, but time has gone, so I must close with just a few words on this last point, WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, THEN HE CAME TO HIS FATHER.

When a sinner comes to himself, he soon comes to his God. This poor prodigal, soon after he came to himself, said, "I will arise and go to my father." What led him back to his father? Very briefly Let me answer that question.

First, *his memory awakened him*. He remembered his father's house, he remembered the past, his own riotous living. Do not try to forget all that has happened—the terrible recollections of a misspent past may be the means of leading you to a new life. Set memory to work.

Next, *his misery bestirred him*. Every pang of hunger that he felt, the sight of his rags, the degradation of associating with swine—all these things drove him back to his father. O Sirs, let your very needs, your cravings, your misery, drive you to your God!

Then, *his fears whipped him back*. He said, "I perish with hunger." He had not perished, yet, but he was afraid that he soon would do so. He feared that he really would die, for he felt so faint. O Sirs, see what will become of you if you die in your sins! What awaits you but an endless future of limitless misery? Sin will follow you into eternity and will increase upon you, there, and as you shall go on to sin, so shall you go on to sorrow always increasing. A deeper degradation and a more tremendous penalty will accompany your sin in the world to come! Therefore, let your fears drive you home, as they drove home the poor prodigal.

Meanwhile, *his hope drew him*. This gentle cord was as powerful as the heavy whip—"In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare; I need not perish with hunger, I may yet be filled." Oh, think of what you may yet be! Poor sinner, think of what God can do and is ready to do for you, to do for you even tonight! How happy He can make you! How peaceful and how blessed! So let your hope draw you to Him. Then, his resolve moved him. He said, "I will arise and go to my father." All else drove him or drew him and now he is resolved to return home! He rose up from the earth on which he had been sitting amidst his filthiness and he said, "I will." Then the man became a man! He had come to himself, the manhood had come back to him, and he said, "I will, I will."

Lastly, there was the real act of going to his father—it was that which brought him home. No, let me correct myself. It is said, "*He came to his father*," but there is a higher Truth of God at the back of that, *for his father came to him*. So, when you are moved to return and the resolution becomes an *action* and you arise, and go to God, salvation is yours almost before you could have expected it, for, once turn your face that way, and while you are yet a great way off, your Father will outstrip the wind and come and meet you, and fall upon your neck, and kiss you with the kisses of reconciliation! This shall be your portion if you will but trust the Lord Jesus Christ!

As for you Christian people who may be saying that there is nothing for you in the sermon, do not turn into a company of grumbling elder brothers! On the contrary, go home and pray God to bless this sermon.

"But," you say, "I have not had the fatted calf tonight." "Oh, but if it were killed for the younger son, it was for you, also!" "I did not have the music and dancing tonight." Well, they have had it over the returned prodigal, over some soul that has already believed in Christ, tonight—I know they have! God does not let us preach for nothing. He will pay us our wages and give us our reward! So rejoice with us over all that the Lord has done, and all that He is going to do! The Lord bless you, Beloved, all of you, without exception, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *LUKE 15.*

This is a chapter that needs no explanation. It carries its key within itself and the experience of every child of God is the best exposition of it. The three parables recorded here set forth the work of saving Grace in different aspects.

Verses 1, 2. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.* The Pharisees and scribes formed the outside ring of Christ's hearers, but the inner circle consisted of the guilty, the heavy-laden and the lowly. They pressed as near to Christ as they could, that they might catch His every word and, besides, there was an attractiveness about His manner that drew them towards Him. His mercy attracted their misery! They needed Him and He desired them—they were thus well met. There will be an inner circle, tonight, when the Gospel is preached, and it will not consist of the self-righteous. They that are full will not press to the table on which the Gospel feast is spread—the *hungry* will be found nearest to the heavenly provision.

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* There are three parables here, but, inasmuch as it is called "this parable," it is really only one. It is a picture in three panels representing the same scene from different points of view.

4. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?* It has a new importance in his eyes, for it is lost. Before, it was only one of a hundred in the fold, but now it is one distinct and separate from all the rest, and the shepherd's thought is fixed upon it.

5, 6. *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* No doubt he was glad that the other sheep were not lost, but that joy was, for a while, quite eclipsed in the more striking and vivid joy over the one which had been lost!

7. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.* If such there is—and there are many who think that they belong to this class—they bring no joy to the great Shepherd. But you who

have had to mourn over your lost estate set the bells of Heaven ringing with a new melody when you are recovered by the great Redeemer! The first of these three parables may be said to represent salvation in reference to the *work of the Son of God* as the great Seeker and Saver of the souls of men. In the second, we have a representation of the *work of the Holy Spirit* in the Church of God.

8. *Or what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it?* Her thoughts were all concerning that one lost piece. It had not more intrinsic value than the rest, but, being lost, it called off her attention from the other nine. She valued it and for the hope of finding it she lighted a candle, swept the house and sought diligently till she found it. This is a picture of the Holy Spirit's work in seeking for lost souls. They bear the King's impress—they are coins of the realm. This woman knew that the silver coin was not far away, so she swept the house and sought diligently, using all her eyes, devoting all her time to this one object, quitting all other avocations until she found it.

9. *And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.* She might never have called them together to rejoice that she had ten pieces of silver—she might even have hidden them—and the joy she had in them might have been only her own, a solitary joy. But now that the one piece had been lost and had been found, again, she says, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

10. *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.* Not joy *among the angels*, as some read it, though no doubt that is a truth, but, "joy in the *presence* of the angels of God." And what can that mean but that God, Himself, rejoices, and rejoices so that angels perceive it! And no doubt they then join in the delight! But all this points out that it is the lost one that is the great object of consideration, that out of any congregation where the Gospel is preached, it is the lost one who is the most important person in the whole place! In the next verses, we get the *Father's part* in the work of the recovery of the wanderer.

11-13. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* His heart was far away when he asked his father to give him his portion and now his body is far away as he goes into the outward wandering which follows after the inner wandering.

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land.* There generally does arise "a mighty famine" in such cases. Famines and other miseries are God's messengers which He sends after His wandering children.

14. *And he began to be in want.* This was a new sensation to him—he had never known it when he was at home. He did not know it in his first

boisterous days away from his father's house, but now, "he began to be in want."

16. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* Perhaps he did not want to employ him but said that he would give him that occupation if he cared to accept it. It was small pay, very dishonoring work to a Jew, not fit employment for the son of a nobleman, yet, "half a loaf is better than no bread," so he took it, though even the half loaf must have been a very small one.

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* Such a thing as generosity was not known in that country. His companions could share his riches when he was living riotously, but they will not share *their* riches, now that he is in his poverty.

17. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* "My father's day-laborers have bread enough and to spare, yet I, his child, perish with hunger."

18, 19. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.* You notice that this last part of the prayer he never did pray, for it was stopped by his father's love! There was a legalism about it, naturally suggested by his own despair, but it was not such as his father would tolerate.

20, 21. *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.* There comes an interruption there; the kiss upon his lips stops the rest of the prayer, which he had prepared, and now the father declares his will concerning the wanderer.

22-24. *But the father said to his servants, 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. And they began to be merry.* I have never read that they left off being merry, for the conversion of a soul is enough to make eternal joy in the hearts of the righteous!

25, 26. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.* This was a new thing and, apparently, a thing that he did not care much about. How had it come to pass that there was such noise, such joy?

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out and pleaded with him.* I hardly know which to admire most, the love of the father when he fell upon the neck of the prodigal, or the love of the father when he went out to talk with his elder son! "Therefore came his father

out, and pleaded with him." Oh, our God is very good to us when we give way to naughty tempers! If we begin to think that we are very holy people, that we have been long the servants of God and that there ought to be some little fuss made over us as well as over great sinners that come into the Church, then our Father is very gentle, and He comes out and entreats us.

29. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* "I have had no banquets. I have kept at home, a patient worker, and have had no extraordinary joys." I know some Christian workers who are very much in this condition. They keep on and on and on in holy service, and they do well, but they seldom have great entertainment's of high joy and unspeakable delight. It is their own fault and it is a thousand pities that they do not have them, for they might have them if they would! There is a tendency to grow so absorbed in service, like Martha, that we are cumbered by it—and we do not have the joy of Mary in communion at the Master's feet. I am sure that this elder son was out of fellowship with his father, or else he would not have talked as he did. We are all apt to get into such a condition. See to it, you who work for Jesus, that it is not so with you! Then the elder brother went on to say—

30. *But as soon as this son of yours came, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* I do not read that the prodigal had devoured his father's living with harlots—that is the elder brother's version of it. I dare say that it was true, but it is always a pity to give the roughest interpretation to things. He had spent his substance "in riotous living." When we are cross, we generally use the ugliest words we can—we may think that we are speaking forcibly, but, indeed, we are speaking naughtily—and not as our Father would have us speak.

31. *And he said unto him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.* Oh, what a word was that! How it reminds Christians of their privileges, if they would but appropriate them! It is yours, Beloved, to live always with your God and to know that all that He has is yours! You ought to live in a perpetual festival—for you there should be one joyful Christmastide that lasts from the beginning of the year to the end of it! "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours."

32. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* It was the fit thing, and the proper thing, and the right thing, that there should be extraordinary joy over a returning sinner. There ought to be, there must be, there shall be special music and dancing over sinners saved by the Grace of God! The Lord give us some such, tonight, and make us glad over them! 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.

THE BELIEVER'S HERITAGE OF JOY
NO. 2415

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 2, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 22, 1887.

"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever:
for they are the rejoicing of my heart."
Psalm 119:111.

WHEN David wrote these words, he was not in a condition of ease and luxury. He was not in a position of assured safety, for he says in the 109th verse, "My soul is continually in my hand." You know what we mean when we say that a man carries his life in his hand—that is to say, he expects death, he is in imminent peril—and may, at any moment, be cut off from his fellows. It was when David was in such a condition as that, hunted, as he tells us in another place, like a partridge upon the mountains, that he could say, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." He was rich in his poverty, he was enthroned in his exile, he was happy in his sorrow and they who have enjoyed a similar experience in their times of distress know how this can be!

I. With no further preface, I want to talk to you about our text under four heads, the first of which will be, LET US MAKE A MAP OF THIS ESTATE—"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

There was David's heritage, that portion of goods that fell to him, that piece of goodly land that was his lot—"Your testimonies." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I cannot draw a complete map of this estate, it is so large, so wonderful, but, thank God, you can go and see it for yourselves! Walk over its broad acres, lie down in its green pastures, rest beside its still waters. It is, indeed, a wealthy country that is described in those two words, "Your testimonies."

But what does the Psalmist mean by this declaration? He means, first, that *he had a heritage of truth in the testimonies of God.* A man's mind is rich very much in proportion to the truth he knows. He who knows the Word of God is mentally rich—he has a large heritage. There are persons, I am told—deists—who believe in God, but who do not believe in the Word of God. They believe, then, in a god who has never spoken, a silent god, a god who has, at any rate, never spoken to his noblest creatures most capable of understanding his mind. To them, God is One who remains locked up forever in exclusiveness, except so far as His works may reveal Him. I think there are many difficulties in the way of receiving such a theory as that. Whatever difficulties there may be about God having spoken to us and given us testimonies—and that is the meaning of the word in our text—there are none so great to overcome as this one would be, that, through all these ages, so many men have sought after

God and so many craving hearts have yearned to find God, yet He should have suffered six thousand years, at least, to pass, and should never have spoken to men a single word that they can understand!

Now, so far from accepting that theory, I believe this Word of God to be God's testimony, God's speech, God's declaration about Himself and about many other things that His creatures need to know—God's witness-bearing to us, out of the depth of His Divine Knowledge—that we may know and understand and see things aright. And I say, and I am sure that many of you will say with me, these speeches of God, these Revelations of God which I find in these two Books of the Old and the New Testaments are my heritage. I rejoice to accept them as the estate of my mind, the treasure of my thought, the mint of the heavenly realm, the mine from which I can explore fresh veins of thought as long as I live, claiming all as my heritage forever! I have been preaching the Word of God these 26 years in this one place to very much the same congregation all the while and if I had been obliged to preach from any other book, I would have worn it threadbare by this time! But the Bible is as fresh to me, today, as when first I began to speak from it as a boy, and preached to you from it as a youth. It is an inexhaustible heritage of mental wealth to the man who will accept it and give his mind to the study of it.

Look at the doctrines, the precepts, the promises, the prophecies, the histories, the experiences—it is no use for me to try to map out this estate, it is so large! As a great heritage of mental wealth, it makes every man who receives it, however illiterate he may be upon other subjects, a wealthy man *spiritually*, while they who discard it become poverty-stricken in mind, whatever else of mental attainments they may possess. That is the first meaning of our text, God's testimonies are a heritage of truth to the man who receives them.

The next meaning is that *God's Covenant is our heritage*. The word, "testimonies," may be understood to mean, and it does mean, God's Covenant. When the Lord Jehovah entered into Covenant with men, He made a testimony to them that He would do this and that—His testimony made the Covenant—and the Covenant was His testimony to men. Now, I can say, and many of you can say with me, I have taken God's Covenant to be my heritage forever. And what a heritage that Covenant is, dear Friends! This is one of its clauses, "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." This is another clause in the Covenant, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."

Again we read, "This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not de-

part from Me." "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." "I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." If I took the whole range of the Covenant, one entire night would not be sufficient time in which to explain it—I would need seven weeks full of seven sermons a day before I could even go round the fringe of the Covenant! Therefore, well might David say that within the compass of that Covenant he found a heritage which he had taken to himself to be his, forever—to be the rejoicing of his heart.

I have not, however, yet brought out all the meaning of our text, or shown you the full map of the estate that is here named, "your testimonies." *The greatest testimony of God in all the world is Jesus Christ.* He is God's testimony embodied. God said to us, "If you want to know what I am, look, there is My Son." And Jesus came and said, "He that has seen the Son has seen the Father." Jesus Christ is God's testimony against sin, for Christ died through our sin. He is God's testimony concerning Divine Love, for God so loved us that He gave His Son to die for us. In Christ you will find that the more you study Him, the more you will see what the invisible God is, for He is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Now, Beloved, I can say, and many of you can say, "We have taken the Lord Jesus Christ to be our heritage forever"—we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus—Christ is all and in all to us. When we once get Christ, we get everything! "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?"

Now, take the testimonies mentioned in our text to be God's Word, God's Covenant, God's Son and there you have a map of your great estate, your goodly heritage. Oh, may the Lord, in His infinite mercy, make us to be so enchanted with this estate, so enraptured with this Divine property, that we shall never rest until we enter into full and final possession of it—and find it to be the rejoicing of our heart!

II. Secondly, I want you to proceed to TAKE POSSESSION OF THE ESTATE. What did David say? "Your testimonies have I taken." He had taken possession of them and our next enquiry must be, how can we take possession of them?

I need not, this evening, repeat what I did this morning. You remember how I went to our friend, behind me, and offered him my hand and he took it? [Sermon #1964, Volume 33—*Why Is Faith so Feeble?*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] Now, this blessed estate of Divine Grace is as free to any soul who is willing to have it as a shake of my hand was to my friend when he grasped it this morning! The Gospel of Grace is as free as the air you breathe—

"None are excluded hence but those
Who do, themselves, exclude."

If the door is ever shut, you have shut it yourselves! This blessed estate is for every man who is willing to take it. How, then, am I to take it?

Well, first, *by a deliberate choice*. David said to the Lord, "Your testimonies have I taken by my own deliberate choice, I have elected to make them my life's chief treasure." I, too, can say, "Because God has chosen me, I have chosen Him. I have deliberately chosen His Book to be my guide, His Covenant to be my trust, His Son to be my Savior." And I know that there are many of you, here, who can make that choice, tonight, because you have made it for many years. Would you change your Bible for anything written by man? Would you change the Covenant for any other compact? Would you change your Savior for any other? God forbid! We have taken God's testimonies to be our heritage forever— willingly, by His Grace, choosing His Grace, being first chosen by Him and, therefore, choosing Him in return!

Next to our choice of God's testimonies comes *the act of faith* which is a personal grip of them. After I had preached in this place one morning, there was a sinner convinced of sin and led to tremble before God. He saw his brother after the service and he asked him, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe," he said. "Well, Brother," he said, "I always did believe! I always have believed the things that are preached and the things that are in the Bible. What more am I to do?" His brother answered, "Why, take them! Grasp them as your own." "I never saw that before," said the man, and so he was brought into the Light of God! Now, that is *faith*! Faith is the hand that grips the Savior and holds Him fast! There is a book. I believe it to be a hymnbook. I need a hymnbook in order to give out a hymn, so I take it up and use it for its own purpose. There is Christ. I believe Him to be a Savior and I need a Savior. I take Him as a Savior to save me—that is faith! Can you believe that Christ can save you and that He will? Then believe it! "I believe that He has saved my mother." Yes, but *that is not saving faith*. "I believe that He can save my sister." True, but *that is not saving faith*. Do you believe *for yourself* that He can save *you*? And will you stake your immortal existence upon His power to save *you*? Will you just rest on Him, sink or swim? If you will do *that*, you shall swim! He never sank who rested on the Lord Jesus Christ! Well, then, that is the way to take this inheritance, to take it by the grip of faith and say, "It is mine!"

"But suppose I were to take it," says one, "and it should not be mine?" That never happened yet, and never will, for Jesus, Himself, said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." No man ever yet took Jesus Christ by mistake! If you will have Him, you have Him, and He will never say no to you. Take Him and He takes you at the same time. May God grant that you may understand that Truth of God and put it in to practice at once! Thus let us proceed to take this estate by deliberate choice and by appropriating faith.

After we have done that, the next thing is to take the full possession of this estate *by holy diligence*. He that believes in Christ has the Everlasting Covenant—he has God's testimonies—they are all his, but he does not yet fully enjoy them. I know a friend who has an estate over which I am pretty sure he has never fully walked, for it is so large. He has climbed the highest hill, but he cannot possibly have seen half the property that belongs to him! There are many such estates that the owners

have not fully seen and there is not a Christian, here, who has ever seen a tenth part of what belongs to him! In the exercise of this holy diligence, you and I have to take possession of the Word of God by studying it more earnestly, to take possession of the Covenant by believing it more fully and to take possession of Christ by communing with Him more closely and using Him more constantly, so that we may say with David, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

Keep on taking, keep on taking, keep on taking! You know the story that is told about the hymn, "More to follow"—how Mr. Rowland Hill, having determined to give to some poor minister a hundred pounds, sent him £5 and wrote in the envelope, "More to follow." To his surprise, at the end of a month, there came another one with, "More to follow," and so it kept on, time after time, till the amount was all given. That is the pity of it—it was all given, some time or other. "More to follow" came to an end. But it is never so with God! With Him it is, "always more to follow." From strength to strength, from joy to joy, from Grace to Grace, we still go on till we come to Heaven—and I suppose, that even there we shall still go on and on in everlasting progress scaling successive heights of bliss! We shall continue to become fuller of glory, or, if always full, yet we shall be made more capacious, that the fullness may be still greater. "Your testimonies have I taken." Go on taking them, Brothers and Sisters, take them to be your heritage forever!

I wish that I could hope that everybody here had, by deliberate choice, by appropriating faith and by holy diligence, taken all the Covenant of God, all the Revelation of God and all the Christ of God to be his heritage forever!

III. Now, thirdly, LET US CONSIDER THE HOLDING. "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

You see what kind of holding we have of this heritage. It is not leasehold, a shorter term every night we go to bed. It is not even a holding similar to that which is commonly used in Scotland, when the lease is for 999 years. No, *it is a perpetual holding*—"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." Well, dear Friend, that is long enough, is it not? What else will you ever take on such a tenancy as that? That is a freehold! "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

"Well," says one, "I have a freehold." Yes, but you will not be free to hold it *forever*. You may be a freeholder, my dear Sir, but you will have to go and your heir will step into your place! Somebody else will walk those acres and call your home *his own*—you have only a life-lease of it at the very outside. It is delightful to think that this inheritance of the Word of God, the Covenant of God, the Christ of God, we have *forever* because *we shall live forever* and we shall hold it forever! It is not dependent upon any one life—it is dependent upon *three* lives—and those three lives are the life of the Father, the life of the Son and the life of the Holy Spirit! And they are all eternal—and so shall the joy and the wealth of every Believer be! We have taken this inheritance forever.

Sometimes we possess certain things which are ours, completely ours, but then they are not ours *forever* because they fade. But *our inheritance will never fade or pass away*. The crown that was won at the Greek

games, though made of amaranth, would yet return to dust before long. There is nothing here on earth but is touched by the moon, and is ready to wane and to depart. There is nothing here that can be held forever, even if we could live here forever to hold it, for all things perish in the using. But this is a crown of life that fades not away, this is a heritage which, after a million years, shall be the same as it is now in fullness of joyful satisfaction! O you people who only think about what you are going to do tomorrow, or about what you will do during the next, well, say 50 years! You sometimes say, "It will be all the same a 100 years from now." Yes, but suppose it is—what will it be a thousand years hence? Why, some, I hope, will have been in Heaven 950 years by that time! Oh, what joy we shall have known during that period! What breakings of the sea of bliss over our enraptured spirits!

But suppose any of us shall have been in Hell all that time? Oh, ghastly thought! But what must it be to have been in Heaven a million years and then to feel that we are but at the beginning of our bliss? "I give unto My sheep eternal life." "Because I live, you shall live, also." The righteous shall go into life eternal! Oh, the splendor of eternity linked with bliss! I beseech you, dear Friends, rejoice if you have taken this heritage that you have taken it forever, for it is that which makes the joy of it!

We have to reckon earthly things and say, "That is the value of the property; take it at 20 years' purchase, or 25 years' purchase." But what must be the value of a blessing that is to last forever and ever? I have sometimes thought what it would be to have a toothache to all eternity. That would be bad enough, for it is the *eternity* that makes the sting of it. But what can we say of a joy that will last when yonder sun is turned into a coal and the moon is black as a sackcloth of hair, and this old world, wrinkled like a bottle in the smoke, shall be flung away as worn-out and useless? You and I, then, in the everlasting youth of a God-given life, shall possess this heritage forever!

Once more, notice that *there is no way of taking this heritage except taking it forever*. There is a way invented by some men of being temporary Christians. It is believed by some that you can take this heritage for three months, or that you can take it for a certain term of years, and then lay it down. They take it not at all who do not take it *forever*! He that enlists in the army of Christ must enlist forever—that is the shortest term on which Christ will take him. If you become a Christian, you must always be a Christian! I heard of a Brother, the other day, a teetotaler, who had been an abstainer, he said, "ten years, off and on." Yes, you may well smile at that remark, but there are some people who want to be Christians of that kind, "off and on." My dear Friends, the members of the Total Abstinence Society are ready to get up and say that they will not admit that man, and I say the same about a Christian man who is "off and on!" No, no! We go in for salvation forever! As David says, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." You cannot take them any other way. That conversion which is not radical and thorough is of no use. If a man converts you, another man can unconvert you! But if *God* converts you, I know that what God does shall be forever! He does

not make temporary Christians, but real, lasting, everlasting Christians, as our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Will you have this heritage for this term? Will you have it forever? Then take it and welcome! May God Himself, by His Divine Spirit, make you an heir of endless life through faith in Jesus Christ His Son!

IV. But not to weary you, I shall close by inviting you, in the last place, to ENJOY, AT ONCE, THE POSSESSION. "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." First, that was an evidence that David had taken God's testimonies to be his possession, for they had made him glad. And, secondly, that was the reason why he took them to be his possession—because they made him glad.

Now, first, *this was a proof that they were his*, because they made his heart rejoice. If your religion does not make you rejoice, it is not worth much. If you do not find a joy in it, you have not really taken it, you have not taken it forever, or, at least, though you may have taken such religion as you have, you have not taken the testimonies of God, the Covenant of Grace, the Christ of God, for if you had done so, you must *rejoice!* One said to me, the other day, speaking of the new style of ministers and the old style, "I used to notice, in the old preachers, that they seemed delighted with what they had to say—even if we did not enjoy it, *they* did. They seemed like men that set out a feast and, every now and then, they had a taste, themselves, they so enjoyed the Truths of God they were preaching. But," he said, "the modern gentlemen—well, they know that it is a poverty-stricken country through which they are traveling. They are pretty well aware that there is no spiritual food for the people and so they do not even *appear* to enjoy the service, themselves, but they get through it in a sadly dignified way—an amazing way, indeed, showing their own talent and wisdom—but there is no hearty enjoyment of it."

And it is so! But when a man has taken God's testimonies to be his everlasting heritage, when you hear him talk about it, his eyes begin to flash, his soul is all on fire, he is full of gladness over it! The genuine convert, too, who has found the Savior, did you ever know him to come see a Christian, and say to him, "Dear Friend, I think that I have believed in Jesus Christ. I think—I *think* that, perhaps, He has pardoned my sin"? Why, you say, that man is not up to the mark! As soon as ever a genuine convert comes to open his mouth, he says, "Oh, dear Sir, I hope that I have found the Savior! I do feel so happy, for I have laid my sins on Jesus, and He has appeared to me, and He has said, 'I have blotted out all your transgressions.' I am so happy that—if I talk too fast, pray do excuse me—but I have passed from death to life and I must tell somebody about the wondrous change! I can say with David, 'Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever,' I know I have done so, for they make my very heart glad! They warm my spirit! They are the rejoicing of my heart!"

You notice David does not merely say, "they make my heart rejoice," but he says, "they are the rejoicing of my heart." He does not merely say, "they give me joy, but they *are* my joy, they are essentially and really the

delight of my spirit." Oh, what a difference it makes, when the man has truly taken Christ as his Savior, in the way in which he looks at his religion! Until you have taken the Covenant, the testimonies and the Christ of God to be your inheritance, you may be, after a fashion, deeply pious, and yet sadly miserable over your piety. Your religion may be as sweet to you as slavery was to a Negro, and not a whit more so. But when you have taken Christ to be yours—

"'Tis love that makes your willing feet
In swift obedience move."

It is love that makes you joyful in God and, being joyful in God, nothing is too hard or too heavy for you, and you say, with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Our feet are made like hinds' feet to leap over difficulties when we have really taken a firm grip of the eternal Truths of God and have taken them to be our heritage forever. It is one of the evidences of Grace when these things are the rejoicing of our heart.

Then, lastly, another way of looking at this Truth of God is this—we take these things to be our heritage because they are the joy of our heart. Dear Friends I would like to refresh the memories of some of you Christian people by recalling your past experience. When you have been very ill, what has your religion been to you, then? I know that you can say, "I almost wish to be ill, again, to enjoy the rest, and the peace, and the delight that I had then!" When my dear Brother, William Olney, behind me, was undergoing most painful operations, I went to see him and I never saw him more happy than he was, then! I do not believe he was happier when he was going to be married than he was when he was awaiting the coming of the surgeon. He was so resting in God, so rejoicing in Christ, that he could not be more delighted than he was! His Master's Presence made him full of gladness!

Others of us know what it is to lie on the verge of death by the week together—and in the stillness of the night to contemplate very closely our approaching end—and to do so as deliberately as if we expected to rise the next morning to transact our business, regarding the eternal state, with hope and desire rather than with fear! We are glad to find that when heart and flesh failed, then there burnt within us another light that no man has ever kindled, another joy than corn and wine and oil can ever give to him who has the largest store of them! O dear Friends, I bear my own personal testimony that there is no joy like that of believing the testimonies of God, accepting the Covenant of Grace and living upon the Christ of God!

I have often said from this pulpit, and I say it again, that if I had to die like a dog, I would wish to be a Christian even for the blessings of this life! But then, of course, it is the *life to come* that makes the joy of this present life, for if that were blotted out, we might be, of all men, most miserable, for we have more than enough of trial and of sadness if it were not for the thought of the world to come! But that life beyond, that hope that enters within the veil, that vision of Christ's face, that prospect of being forever with the Lord—I would part with all the joys of sense to behold His face but for a moment! What must it be to be in His Presence—

in fullness of joy, forever and ever? The expectation of that which is soon to be revealed makes us exceedingly glad.

"Why!" one says, "I thought that Christian people were all miserable people?' It is because you do not know them! And there is another thing you do not know, some of you, that is, how Christians can rejoice. You see, that elder brother, who was such a very proper sort of gentleman, was angry at the rejoicing over the prodigal's return and, "he would not go in." I do not know whether he did go in, after all, but if he did not, he could not tell how merry his father was, he could not tell how merry the servants were, he could not tell how happy was his younger brother who had been lost and now was found! He was angry and would not go in, so he could not know what joy there was in the home. But if he could have gone in with his cruel, cold-blooded temperament and could have looked on—and if he could have caught sight of his brother who had been so lately with the hogs, but who was now washed and cleansed, feasting on that fatted calf—I think his heart would have begun to melt, as Joseph's did when he saw Benjamin. Then, if he had seen the joy of the servants and heard the music, and watched the dancing, I think he would have been ready to take a turn with them!

If he had fixed his eyes on his father and had seen the greatness of his father's love, and the joy beaming in his father's face, I think that he would have rushed up to him and fallen on his father's neck, and kissed him, and said, "Now I know what a blessed thing it must be to dwell in your love." Oh, if you knew the joy of saved sinners, and the joys of those who have prayed and labored for their salvation. If you knew anything of the joy of the happy God, you would understand that a truly Christian life cannot be an unhappy one! God bring you, everyone, to trust in Jesus, His dear Son! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:73-88.

In this Psalm we have, as it were, notes from David's diary.

Verse 73. *Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn Your Commandments.* This is a very instructive prayer. The Psalmist does as good as say, "Lord, You have made me once—make me over again. You have made my body—mold my spirit, form my character, give me understanding." If God should make us, and then leave us without understanding, what imperfect creations we would be! A man devoid of understanding is only a blood and bone creation and, therefore, the Psalmist does well to pray, "Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding." But what sort of an understanding is desired? That I may learn to discuss and dispute? No, "that I may learn Your Commandments," for holiness is the best of wisdom and the surest proof of a right understanding is obedience to God's Commandments.

74. *They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word.* A hopeful godly man is a continual source of joy to other people. When a man can inspire hope in his fellows—and he can-

not do that unless he is full of hope, himself—he lights a fire of comfort. Bring such a man into a storm and he helps you to be brave. "They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word."

75. *I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me.* We are glad to listen to a man who can tell us that—an old man, a tried man who can say that God has been faithful in afflicting him—a man who, after having borne the brunt of tribulation, can yet bless God for it. Such testimonies as these are full of joy and gladness to the young folk—they can encounter trial with a joyous heart when they hear what their fathers tell of the goodness of God to them in their troubles!

76. *Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant.* "Lord," he seems to say, "I have been a comfort to others—be You a comfort to me. You have made others glad to see me, make me glad with the recollection of all my experience of Your mercy. 'Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort.'" If you have lost your own comfort, dear Friends, see where you are to look for it—to the merciful kindness of God! Those are two beautiful words, are they not? "Merciful"—take that to pieces and it is mercy-full. Is not God full of mercy? Take the next word to pieces—"kindness." That means, "kinned-ness"—that kind of feeling that we have to our own kin when they are very dear to us. "Lord, let Your mercy-full kinned-ness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant."

77. *Let Your tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.* "I am so broken down, my bones are so full of pain, that if You handle me roughly, I shall die. 'Let Your tender mercies come unto me.' I am like a poor flower whose stalk is almost broken through, ready to droop and die. Let Your tender mercies bind me up, that I may live."

77. *For Your Law is my delight.* God will not let a man die who delights in His Law! You are the sort of man who shall live. If you love the Law of God, the Word of God, the will of God, the way of God, He will not let you die! There are none too many of your sort in the world, so the Lord will keep you alive so long as you can serve Him here.

78. *Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts.* That is a delightful turning of the subject—"They dealt perversely with me, without a cause"—but David does not say, "I will envy the proud," or, "I will be spiteful to them," or, "I will fret myself because of them." No, he seems to say, "They may do what they will, but I will meditate in Your precepts." When anyone has treated you contemptuously, or dealt perversely with you without a cause, instead of resenting it, get to your Bible! Meditate in God's precepts! It is the noblest and, at the same time, the most successful way of fighting against contempt, so to despise the despising of men as to rejoice in your thoughts of God and His Truth!

79. *Let those that fear You turn unto me, and those that have known Your testimonies.* "Lord, make me such a man that they who fear You may seek my acquaintance. Of Your great mercy grant that if any of them have turned away from me through hearing slanderous reports about

me, they may be inclined, now, to come back to me, for I love them, and I would not willingly offend them. 'Let those that fear You turn unto me.'"

80. *Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I am not ashamed.* When the heart is right with God, there will be no need to be ashamed. Though you may make some mistakes and blunders, because you are human, yet, if you are sincere, shame shall not overtake you. What a blessing it is to have a sound heart! But when the heart is spiritually *unsound*, the profession is always in danger. The other day a friend of ours was taken from us almost in an instant through heart disease—and when Judas sells his Master, or when Demas turns aside to the silver mines of earth, it is the result of heart disease. There are many who go about in the Christian Church with a ruddy face and apparently with great strength of religion—but all of a sudden they prove apostates. Yes, that is the effect of heart disease! Therefore, pray very earnestly with the Psalmist, "Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I be not ashamed."

81. *My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word.* What? Faint and hoping, too? Yes, a Christian is a wonder and a contradiction to many, but most of all to himself! He cannot understand himself. He faints and yet he hopes. Two apparently opposite emotions may be at the same time in the Christian bosom! Every man is two men, if he is a man in Christ Jesus. I sometimes think that there is a triplet of characters in every man of God, so that he has *three* different experiences at the same time. Certainly he can have two, for here we have them—"My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word."

82. *My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me?* "I look for it till my eyes ache! I strain my eyes to see Your Word, watching for it till my vision grows dull in waiting! 'My eyes fail for Your Word, saying.'" Oh, then, his eyes could *speak*! Yes, eyes can say a great many things! And blessed are the eyes that have learned to say this—"When will You comfort me?" It is a good way of praying, sometimes, to say nothing at all, but to sit still and look up. The eyes can say what lips and tongue cannot, so learn well the language of the eyes and talk to God with them, even as He talks to you with His eyes. "I will guide you," He says, "with My eye." Be you, therefore, able to speak to God with your eyes, as David was when he wrote, "My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will you comfort me?"

83. *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.* An old dried-up skin bottle that is hung in the smoke of the tent over the fire till it is wrinkled and cracked—and almost good for nothing.

83. *Yet do I not forget Your statutes.* "Beauty is gone, strength is gone, comeliness is gone, but not my memory of Your Word, O Lord." What a mercy it is that when the worst comes to the worst with us, still the best remains—"I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes."

84. *How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?* "Lord, I have but a short life; let me not have a long affliction." Does he mean, "Lord, I have lived too long in this miserable state; I wish my days were shortened"? We must not

murmur at the length of our days, but we may plead that persecution may come to an end. We may even go so far as to say with David, "How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?"

85. *The proud have dug pits for me which are not after Your Law.* It is not often that proud men take to digging, but here, you see, these children of the Pit learn to dig pits for God's people—and they still have not given up the practice! Pits were dug in olden times to catch wild beasts, but now, often, the wicked dig pits to try to catch good men, seeking, if they can, to make a fault where there is none, or to lead us into a line of conduct which they shall be able to represent unfavorably—"The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law."

86. *All Your Commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help You me.* What a prayer that is! Store it up for use, dear Friend! Carry it home with you. That is the kind of prayer to be prayed on the roadside, in a railway carriage, yes, even in an accident—"Help You me." "Help You me," is a wonderful prayer! It seems to turn on a swivel whichever way you wish—you may use it to ask for anything you need in every time of emergency—"Help You me."

87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth.* "They had almost eaten me up; they had almost burned my life out. Blessed be God, they could not consume me anywhere except upon earth! My immortal part would escape the burning of their coals of juniper! They had almost consumed me, but almost is not altogether." When God delivers His people from the lion and the bear, the jaws of the wild beasts may be almost closed, yet they shall be opened wide enough for us to escape! "They had almost consumed me upon earth."

87. *But I forsook not Your precepts.* You cleave to the right and God will not turn away from you, nor will He let you turn away from His precepts.

88. *Quicken me after Your lovingkindness.* That is a blessed prayer for us to offer. If any of you feel dull and drowsy. If any of you are heavy and slow in your movements, cry to the Lord, "Quicken me after Your lovingkindness."

88. *So shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.* Spiritual life is the root of holiness—"Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth." May God bless this reading to our instruction! 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.

ADORNING THE GOSPEL
NO. 2416

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 9, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 26, 1887.

"That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."
Titus 2:10.

I AM afraid that there are some Christians who would hardly like the best preaching that they could ever have. The best doctrine that could ever be delivered would be like that of our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself—eminently ethical, full of precepts and words of wisdom for daily life. I verily believe that if some stern doctrinalists had heard some of Christ's sermons, they would have said that they had not the Gospel in them! He did not preach, every time He spoke, those grand doctrines which plainly show the way of salvation, but He frequently proclaimed those important precepts which show us the *fruits* of salvation and which help us to judge whether we have been saved or not.

You will notice that it was often the same in the preaching of the Apostles. Although Paul, himself, is a master of doctrine and, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, gives us a whole system of theology in miniature—though he never shrinks from the most profound doctrine, going to the very depths of the Doctrine of Election and to the very heights with the Doctrines of Justification by Faith and the Final Preservation of the Saints—yet he is preeminently practical in his teaching and often deals with the details of ordinary life.

Exceedingly noticeable is this in his Epistle to Titus. As you know, Titus was a teacher of teachers. He had to set in order the things that were needing and to show other preachers how they were to preach. He was told to bid the aged men to "be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience." Further, he was to instruct "the aged women, likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things." This was very close dealing with most practical matters! These aged women, in their turn, were to be instructors, "that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed. Young men, likewise, exhort to be sober minded." You see how much of the Epistle is taken up with the affairs of ordinary life and matters of holy practice. So let our preaching be and let Christian people learn to receive joyfully such instruction! God will assuredly bless it, not only to its own great end of promoting holiness, but also as the means of convincing men of sin wherein they deviate from these blessed precepts—and thus, by conviction of sin—leading them to

feel their need of a Savior and thus, incidentally, driving them to the Cross where all hopes of salvation must alone be fixed!

I feel glad that my text is so practical and I am not ashamed to preach the practical precepts of our holy faith. Yet I want you to notice how continually and how wisely Paul interweaves his practical exhortations with the doctrines of religion. He would have the bondservants to be obedient, honest and faithful towards their masters for this reason, "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Ah, you who despise doctrines, who turn upon your heels if there is a doctrinal sermon, where are you, now, when the true motive for which holiness of life is to be carried out is to be found here, "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things"? It is the fashion, nowadays, to talk much about preaching Christ, but not His doctrines. I neither understand nor wish to understand what that expression can mean. Christ without His doctrine? The great Teacher without His teachings? The Lord without His commands? The Christ without His anointing? Jesus, the only Savior, without His precious blood of Atonement? This is Judas-like, to betray the Son of Man with a kiss, to set up a engraved image in the place of Christ, a stuffed idol from which everything is absent that is vital to the true Christ of God! Dear Friends, we love "the doctrine of God our Savior" with all our hearts! We have received it to the joy of our spirit and in it we find the mainspring of motive which leads us to love our God and to walk in obedience to His precepts.

There are two matters upon which I am going to speak as the Holy Spirit shall guide me. First, *here is a name of adornment for the Gospel*—"the doctrine of God our Savior." And, secondly, *here is a method of adornment for the Gospel*. These poor slaves were bid to so act that they should adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things.

I. First, here is A NAME OF ADORNMENT FOR THE GOSPEL. Let us think it over for a few minutes—"the doctrine of God our Savior."

Dear Friends, our misery was great, otherwise we had never needed a Savior who should be called, "God our Savior." For a little sin, or for a sin however great, which had but little of evil in its consequences, we might have been saved by some finite being! But if God, Himself, must leave His high abode and sojourn here to be our Savior, then was our ruin terrible in the extreme! It is part of the doctrine that we have learned from the Bible that man is lost and utterly undone by nature and by practice, too. And we could not fully preach "the doctrine of God our Savior" if we did not show, first, how awful is the gulf which is open before us—which none but God could fill. To proclaim aright the remedy for sin, we must declare how desperate was the disease, which none but God could heal, nor even He, except by shedding of His own blood! Surely this is a grand doctrine—that we need a Divine Savior, and that there is such a Savior provided—but that apart from Him there is no salvation!

It is also a very precious thought to us that while our ruin is evidently great, yet it is most sure that the remedy is equally great, or even greater, for we have a Savior whose name is, "God our Savior." He is the one door of hope for the most despairing and desponding of men, "God our Savior." Further down in this chapter, Paul calls Him, "the great God and

our Savior Jesus Christ." He that has come from Heaven to save us is a Man and feels for us with all the sympathy of a man, but He is also God and, therefore "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." It is the best news that was ever published among the sons of men, that He whom we have offended has, Himself, become our Savior!

When no eye had pitied—when, even had it pitied, there was still no arm that could have sufficed for our rescue—His eye pitied and His arm was made bare for the salvation of the sons of men! This was the Doctrine that, in Paul's days, was whispered about everywhere, from Nero's palace, down to those horrible holes where the slaves had to sleep at night. Afterwards, in the catacombs and in the caves of the earth, this was the story that the poor people came together to hear—that God was a Savior, that the Most High had, Himself, interposed to save the fallen and ruined sons of men! When it could be preached in the streets, it was so preached. When it might be proclaimed in the public synagogue, or in a school where philosophers gathered, or on Mars Hill at Athens, it was so preached. But when it could not be spoken in public, it was *whispered* and told privately from one to another of those who believed. Even the slaves passed on the message of hope to their fellow slaves, so that this grand Doctrine—"the doctrine of God our Savior"—was scattered abroad as the light is spread when the sun rises in the East and hastens on his course till the whole round globe is lightened by his golden rays!

"The doctrine of God our Savior." Once more, my dear Friends, *this Doctrine is, in itself, Divine*, for there is an idiom here by which we are made to understand that it is not only a doctrine which speaks *of* God our Savior, but it is *the* Doctrine of God our Savior! It is His breath—the Doctrine is, itself, the very breath of God! This Divine teaching, this Revelation, this doctrine of salvation by a Divine Savior, has a divinity about itself! Let us, therefore, proclaim it wherever we have the opportunity and let us not attempt to conquer the world with any other weapon but "the doctrine of God our Savior!" Let us take it as David took Goliath's sword from Ahimelech and say, "There is none like that; give it to me."

I do not believe in the science of comparative religions. No! There is but one true religion, all the rest are lies! There is but one faith of God's elect. There is "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism." There is but one faith that comes from God! Paul once wrote the words, "another gospel," but, directly, as if afraid somebody would catch at the expression and think there might be two gospels, he recalled the words, and said, "which is not another, but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." There is but *one* message of salvation and that concerns the one and only Savior—and—"there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This will be thought by some people to be very narrow-minded talk, but we are not at all afraid of being thought narrow-minded! We are a great deal more afraid of running in the broad way with the multitude to do evil and excusing others in the doing of it! No, the Word of Christ, Himself, still stands—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in

Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

So, you see, this wonderful teaching of Paul's reminds us of the greatness of our misery, of the Divine Nature of our Savior and implies that the Doctrine, itself, is of a Divine order. I think I ought, also, to say, dear Friends, that these things being so, our safety is great! Our salvation, because we have God for our Savior, is great, indeed! In his Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul asks the question which has never been answered—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

You can never think too much of this great salvation! When you desire it, prize it as a beggar might prize gold. When you have it, grasp it as the pearl of great price! We have, indeed, a great salvation—it is salvation from spiritual death, salvation from the rule and government of Satan, as well as from the manners and customs of an ungodly world. And it is also salvation from the guilt of sin, salvation from the dread of Hell, salvation from the fear of death and, it shall ultimately be perfect salvation from the least spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Our salvation to the fullest will only be revealed in the day of Christ's appearing, when the body, also, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and all the surroundings of this poor sin-smitten earth—and the creation, itself—through this great salvation, shall be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

"The doctrine of God our Savior"—the more I think of all that is meant by these words, the more it seems to be an ornament of the rarest kind for the neck of the Gospel! "The doctrine of God our Savior." Turn the words over in your minds—see what a Gospel it is that you have received, see how great it is, see how Divine it is—prize it so as to rejoice in it day by day and so as to defend it, if necessary, with your lives! Rejoice in it so that when you come to die, it shall be the light that shall remove the darkness of the last dread hour!

Let us make a little further enquiry into this Doctrine of God our Savior. Why is the Gospel called by this name? Well, first, because *God, our Savior, is the Author of the Doctrine, and the Author of the salvation which it brings.* It all comes from Him. It seems to be thought, nowadays, that the Gospel which we have received has been evolved from man's inner consciousness and that there are to be further evolutions which will blot out the present as the human race keeps rising, from platform to platform, till, one of these days, it will get up—God, alone, knows where—but certainly far beyond any necessity for such a Gospel as the martyrs died for and the Apostles declared! With such views we have no sympathy, whatever, and we entertain towards such erroneous notions the most determined opposition! We believe in a Revelation from God and we believe

that it is woe unto him who adds to or takes from that Revelation. We do not think the Church will have a particle of enthusiasm left in it—and it has none too much now—if ever people should get the idea that the Gospel is not a Divine Revelation, but only the product of human thought. Dear Friends, the doctrine that we believe and teach, and by which we have been saved, is, "the doctrine of God our Savior" because it came from Him—He is the Author of it.

And next, it is "the doctrine of God our Savior" because He is the substance of it. If you take the whole Truth of the Gospel and compress it till you get the very essence of it, you will find that it is, "Jesus only." The very substance of the Gospel is Jesus Christ, Himself—His Person, His work, His glorious offices. It is, indeed, "the doctrine of God our Savior." Beware that you hear no doctrine but that which exalts Him! If there is any teaching which puts Him into a corner, you get into a corner as far as you can from it! If there is any teaching that does not lift Him up, how can it be blessed of the Holy Spirit, since it is the Holy Spirit's work to reveal Christ to His people and to make Him great in their thoughts?

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good"

and, therefore, to this Gospel we must adhere with all our hearts! It is the Doctrine of God our Savior, for He is the substance of it!

Yet again it is the Doctrine of God our Savior because *He is the object of it—it all points to Him.* If you hear a real Gospel sermon, it directs you to look to Jesus Christ. That teaching which leads you to think of the priest and to think of the church, whatever there may be about them that is good, is not "the doctrine of God our Savior." "To Him give all the Prophets witness," to Him the Gospel continually points and this is the preacher's one cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

This "doctrine of God our Savior" is simplicity, itself, and yet no man ever understood it except by the Holy Spirit's teaching, for no man can rightly say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit. Simple as it is, it seems to me that it is the most wonderful thing that was ever revealed, if I think of the effect it has upon the hearts of men! When Paul began to preach it and when he wrote these words to Titus, this simple teaching was being carried all over the known world by enthusiastic spirits, some of them able to speak in strange tongues and with words of eloquence, but the great mass of them, poor people, servants, *slaves*! Yet, wherever they went, they that were scattered abroad, spread this doctrine everywhere and it burned away until the great Roman Empire simmered like a pot on the fire and, after a while, boiling over and scalding many with its scum.

The great ones of the earth, of course, ridiculed this "doctrine of God our Savior"—it was "foolishness" to them—and he that received it was thought to be an idiot—he had forsaken the gods of his fathers, so he must be a fool. Yet the doctrine still went on spreading and then they tried to put out the fire and to quench it with blood, but men bravely died for it rather than deny it! They pressed to the judgment seats, so determined to avow their faith in Christ that Roman governors had to write

home to know what they were to do. The more they put the Christians to death, the more Christians there were! Further cruelties were committed—unspeakable tortures of all kinds were invented—but, for Christ's sake, His followers endured all! They seemed to come on with an almost Omnipotent force to make a huge hecatomb of victims! They appeared to press onward through martyrdoms of a most horrible kind and all the while, this "doctrine of God our Savior" had a wonderful power among men!

And, dear Friends, you who are conversant with Church history know how often this Doctrine has broken all the bands that wicked men tried to fasten around it. I often wondered, until I understood the *supernatural* reason for it, what made the French Protestants, for instance, meet together in the desert, towards the South of France, while they were being dragooned by the king's soldiers and while multitudes of them were being hunted to death. How was it that, in the dead of night, in lonely places, they came together to hear the Gospel? What is there about this Gospel that seems to touch the soul of man and makes him quite another creature—makes him joyous instead of sad, and makes him so mighty that he dares to defy death and Hell in defense of it? The reason is because this Doctrine cures the woe and misery of the *soul*—and brings light, comfort, happiness and hope to it! It is made by God, on purpose, to touch the heart of man and stir it to its very depths!

As for the new doctrine that many are teaching—it has not enough in it to make even a mouse enthusiastic! It has not enough in it for them to bait a mousetrap of their own—and the only way in which they can make any progress at all is by sneaking into our churches, obtaining a hearing and winning attention, and then, traitors as they are, speaking against the very Truths of God that has built our houses of prayer! They cannot build their own places of worship—there is nothing in their teaching that can make anybody generous and there is nothing in it that can make anybody glad. No, it is "the doctrine of God our Savior" that Paul insists upon, and he says to Titus, "having adorned it as well as I can with my preaching, now you take care that you and your people adorn it with your lives."

II. That is to be the second part of my subject, A METHOD OF ADORNMENT FOR THE GOSPEL.

Let us enquire, first, *who were the persons* who were to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things"? They were, according to our translation, "servants," but the correct word would be serfs, or slaves. These Christian slaves were to adorn the Doctrine of God their Savior. Some of these slaves—the women slaves especially—spent much of their time in adorning their mistresses. I will not attempt to repeat the terrible stories that are told of Roman women and their cruelty to their handmaids. Certainly the poor slaves had to spend hours upon hours in the adornment of their mistresses and some of the male "swells" of the Roman Empire wasted a great deal of the time of their slaves—the men, I mean—in the adornment of themselves. So that these slaves would have a pretty good idea of what was meant by the ornamenting or adorning of

the Gospel and it must have struck them as a very wonderful thing that they should be selected to adorn the Gospel!

The word is not applied to the masters, to the princes, or to any of the great ones of the earth—but to those, who, in addition to being poor, were not even owners of themselves! Slaves in Paul's days were simply goods and chattels, but they were regarded as goods and chattels of the very lowest kind—they were as often and as freely sold as the sheep in the market. Think of how they used to be treated, when, for instance, for making a slight mistake in waiting at table, a slave was thrown into the fishpond to be eaten alive by the fish—the thing was frequently done. The most fearful punishments were executed on them and you might have seen in Pompeii the wretched places by the doorway where the slave, who was the porter, had an iron collar and a weight about his neck, and where he slept under the stairs, as a dog might do in a kennel and, perhaps, for years never left his miserable den. Yet *these* were the kind of people who were to adorn the Gospel! Paul did not think badly of them. Everybody else did, but he set the task of adorning the Gospel by making it lovely and beautiful in the eyes of men—to even the very poorest and worst-off as to their position! Is it not wonderful to think of, and yet, such is the literal fact?

Paul also told them *how they were to adorn the Gospel*. I do not think, for a moment, Paul believed that the practice of slavery ought to exist. He believed to the fullest extent that the great principles of Christianity would overthrow slavery anywhere and the sooner they did so, the better pleased would he be, but, for the time being, as it was the custom to have slaves, they must adorn the Doctrine of God their Savior in the position in which they were.

Slaves in those days were constantly rebelling. At one time they rose up and, for a while, they kept all Rome in fear and alarm, for the masters thought they would all be killed by their rebellious slaves. So Paul exhorts them, first, "to be obedient unto their own masters." Then the man's master, however wicked he might be, would say, "Whatever has come over my slave? My orders are exactly carried out—all I could wish to have done is done, and done well. He is not an eye-servant or a mere man-pleaser, but he does his work heartily and I have heard him say that he does it out of love to one, Jesus, who is his God and Savior." The slave was to put aside all his selfishness and, finding himself a slave, to determine that he would so serve his master that he might recommend his religion to his master!

The slaves were also to be "well pleasing" to their masters—"to please them well in all things." They were not to be always quarrelling, grumbling and complaining about this, and that, and the other, but to wear a contented spirit. Then the master would be sure to ask, "What can have come over my slave?" And, by the way in which he acted, the slave would be a practical missionary to his master!

Paul added, "not answering again." Of course, the slaves were usually sharp in their retorts to their masters. They did not care whether they lived or died and they said hard things. Paul says let the quiet patience of the Christian slaves make their masters and mistresses wonder what it is

that has made such a difference in them. He also added, "not purloining." Slaves and servants in Paul's time were all thieves. In the writings of secular authors of that period, you constantly meet with the declaration that, "to multiply servants is to multiply thieves." Of course the poor creatures helped themselves whenever they could—if you treat a man like a dog, should you be surprised if he acts like one? But the *Christian* slave might be trusted with untold gold! And obedience to this precept, "not purloining," was the way in which he adorned the Doctrine of God, his Savior.

He was also to be faithful to his master—"showing all good fidelity." There were Christian slaves who had bad masters, who, nevertheless, were faithful to them in guarding their interests, and it was such a marvel that the rich heathen who despised the name of Christ, yet coveted to buy Christian slaves, for they found them to be the most faithful of mankind and wondered what it was that made them so! This is what Paul meant when he said that they should adorn the Doctrine of God, their Savior, in their sad and low estate, by not being degraded by it, but standing up in the grandeur of their Christian liberty, determining that they would not be the slaves of sin—and this was a wonderful adornment for the Gospel!

You and I are not slaves! We have been saved from that degradation by this Gospel of God our Savior, for our fathers were as much slaves as these poor people were, but we are free. *What can we do to adorn the Gospel of God our Savior*? Well, first, remember that the adornment of the Gospel of God our Savior is not to be esthetic. We cannot adorn the Gospel with music, with painting and with architecture. When you stand beneath the blue sky and see how God has decked His world with many flowers beneath your feet, and all around you hear the birds singing. And when, in the still and silent night, you gaze upon the silver stars, you feel that there is nothing we can build and nothing we can make that is in the least worthy of the great God. You remember how Stephen said of the Temple at Jerusalem, "Solomon built Him an house," and then added, "Howbeit the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands. As says the Prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?" As much as to say there was nothing in all that material grandeur, for, from the very day in which Solomon built the Temple with all its splendor, religion declined and decayed throughout all Israel! You cannot "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" with anything tangible and material—it is to be adorned in quite another way.

Neither can you adorn the Doctrine by anything peculiar in your garb or your mode of speech, as some have tried to do. The Gospel is not any the better for a broad brim to your hat. It will not be any the worse for the color of your coat. Neither can it be adorned by any ecclesiastical addition whatever! Neither can it be adorned by the flowers of rhetoric. What grand speeches are sometimes made about the Gospel! Yet, somehow, they do not seem to fit it. The Gospel is best adorned when most unadorned! In her native beauty she is altogether unrivalled, she is then

a queen—but when you deck her out, as they do who come from Rome, with meretricious garments—her true splendor is marred and hidden.

How, then, can we ornament the Gospel? An ornament should always be suitable. Nothing is really ornamental that is not suitable to the person upon whom it is placed. Then, what is appropriate to the Gospel? Well, *holiness* suits the Gospel. Adorn it with a holy life! How pure, how clean, how sweet, how heavenly the Gospel is! Hang, then, the jewels of holiness about its neck and place them as rings on its hands. The Gospel is also to be adorned with *mercifulness*. It is all mercy, it is all love, there is no love like it—"God so loved the world." Well, then, adorn the Gospel with the suitable jewels of mercifulness and kindness! Be full of loving-kindness to others, for you have tasted of the lovingkindness of the Lord! The Gospel is also the Gospel of happiness. It is called, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." A more correct translation would be, "the happy God." Well, then, adorn the Gospel by being happy!—

"Why does your face, you humble souls,
Those mournful colors wear?"

Adorn the Gospel by a cheerful countenance and a happy life!

Men of business, adorn the Gospel by the strictness of your integrity. Ours is a just Gospel, for God is Just, and yet the Justifier of everyone that believes in Jesus. The Gospel makes abundant provision for justice to all men, so I pray that you may be so exact, so particular about everything, that when men speak of you, they will not be able to say that you make a profession of religion, but it has not much effect upon your life. Never let it be so said truthfully—be so strictly just that people will not need to count money after you, for in that way they will see what is the meaning of the expression, "adorning the doctrine." A person asked me, one day, "Is not such-and-such a person Baptist?" I replied, "I do not know him." He said, "He is a fellow who says a very long grace before his dinner and he goes to such-and-such a Chapel." "Well," I answered, "if he goes there, he certainly attends a Baptist Chapel." Then he said, "He is as big a thief as there is out of prison anywhere." I said, "I hope he is not a Baptist. At any rate, he is not a *Christian* if he is what you say, for a Christian is an honest man." Unless we are strictly so, we do not adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior.

Adorn the Gospel, next, by your *unselfishness*. If you are always looking to your own interests. If you have no thought but for your own personal comfort. If your religion can live and die within your own heart, you have not any that is worth having! If you would adorn the Gospel, you must love others, love them intensely and make it one objective of your lives to make other people happy, for so you will then be acting according to the spirit and genius of the Gospel, and you will be adorning the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things!

Again, let a spirit of *quick forgiveness* be upon you. Resent no injury. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Thus you will have a fine set of jewels to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior!

Next, *have patience under trouble*. Be not afraid of sudden fear. Be not carried away into grumbling or murmuring in the time of your poverty or pain. A patient woman, one who can bear up and bear on under all kinds of adversity, is one of the greatest ornaments of the Gospel!

A placid and steady calm is also a great adornment for the Gospel. One has seen such gentleness of spirit in some Christian matrons that we have felt that they have been an ornament to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. May we learn that holy calm and may the Spirit of God so dwell in us that in all we say, and all we do, and all we are, we may adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things! May the Lord add His blessing upon this discourse, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
TITUS 2:6-15; 3.

Titus 2:6. *Young men, likewise, exhort to be sober minded.* They are full of spirits, they are very sanguine, they are apt to be carried away with novelties—exhort them to have that which is thought to be a virtue of age, namely, sobriety. Let them be old when they are young that they may be young when they are old.

7. *In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works.* Titus was, himself, a young man. He must, therefore, be a pattern to young men and, as a pastor or Evangelist, he must be a pattern to all sorts of men.

7, 8. *In doctrine showing incorruptibility, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.* It is a pity when the Truth of God suffers at the hand of its own advocate and, perhaps, the very worst wounds that Truth has received have been in the house of its friends. You must be careful, therefore, "that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

9. *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters.* They were mostly slaves in those days. A sad condition of society was that in which service meant slavery, yet even slaves were "to be obedient unto their own masters."

9, 10. *And to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining.* Not practicing petty thefts, as, alas, some servants do even now—

10. *But showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.* The life of the Christian, even if he is a servant, is to be an ornament of Christianity. Christ does not look for the ornament of His religion to the riches or the talents of His followers, but to their *holy lives*, "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

11, 12. *For the Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.* Christians are not to run out of the world, as monks and hermits sought to do, but to live "in this present world." Yet, while in the world, we are to be godly—that is, full of God! That kind of life which is without God is not for

Christians! Those worldly desires, the pride and ambition which are common to worldly men are not to have power over us. We are to deny them and to live soberly. This word relates not only to eating and drinking, but to the general sobriety of a man's mind—"Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

13, 14. *Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* See what Christ died for? See what Christ lives for? See what we are to live for—that we should not only be a people purified, but purified unto Himself! We are not only to have good works, but we are to be *zealous* of them—we are to burn with zeal for them, for zeal is a kind of fire—it is to burn and blaze in us until we warm and enlighten others!

15. *These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you.* As I have already reminded you, Titus was a young man, and people are apt to despise the pastoral office when it is held by a young man. Yet they ought always to *respect* it, whether it is held by a young man or an old man. God knows best who is most fitted for the work of the ministry—and those of us who are getting old must never look with any kind of scorn or contempt upon those who are commencing their service, for we, too, were once young. You cannot measure a man's Grace by the length of his beard, nor by the number of his years.

Titus 3:1, 2. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be not brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.* Gentleness was not reckoned a virtue among the Greeks. I do not suppose that the people in Crete had ever heard of it before Paul wrote this Epistle to Titus. Among the Romans and the Greeks, it seemed to be a virtue to stand up for your own, to be like a gamecock who is always ready to fight and will never miss a chance of fighting. But this Christian virtue of gentleness is a most amiable one and greatly adorns the Doctrine of Christ. The world has run away with this word, gentle, and now calls many a person a gentleman who has no right to the name. I wish that every gentleman were, indeed, a gentleman! It is very significant that Moses, the type of the Lord Jesus under the Law, was the meekest of men—should not Christians, therefore, excel in gentleness under this milder dispensation?

3, 4. *For we ourselves, also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God, our Savior, toward man appeared.* "The philanthropy of God" would be a good translation, or rather, a sort of borrowing from the Greek itself. "After we had seen the philanthropy of God"—

5-8. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs ac-*

cording to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying. It would be worthwhile for you to turn to the other places in which this expression, "This is a faithful saying," occurs.

8. *And these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.* They are saved by *faith*—let them be careful to maintain good works. "These things are good and profitable unto men," that is, to those who practice and observe them.

9. *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the Law; for they are unprofitable and vain.* There are hundreds of questions which are thought, by some people, to be very important, but which have no practical bearing, whatever, either upon the Glory of God, or upon the holiness of man. We are not to go into these matters—let those who have time to waste take up these questions—as for us, we have not time enough for things that are unprofitable and vain.

10, 11. *A man who is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself.* When it comes to unbelief of fundamental and vital doctrines, we who are like Titus, set in office over a Church, must deal with such deadly evils with a strong hand.

12, 13. *When I shall send Artemas unto you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.* Paul had already told Titus to bid the saints in Crete to abound in good works. Now he is commanded to take care of certain traveling Christians and to speed them on their way. It was the custom in olden times, when traveling was very different from what it is now, when the Christians passed from one town to another, to find the Church and to be entertained and speeded on their journey by their fellow Believers. Thus they kept up a practical fellowship of love to all the saints.

14, 15. *And let our people, also, learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute you. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.* May that final benediction drop like the dew upon this whole company! "Grace be with you all. 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.

FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING
NO. 2417

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 16, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 2, 1887.

"When He saw their faith, He said to him, Man, your sins are forgiven you." Luke 5:20.

I HAVE read to you the narrative of the healing of the man taken with the palsy and many of you remember that, last Sabbath evening, I preached upon the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law who were "sitting by" [Sermon #1991, Volume 33—*"Sitting By"—Read/download entire sermon at* http://www.spurgeongems.org .] I tried to represent the position of many in our congregations who are just "sitting by." I preached to the outsiders of the congregation on the divers reasons which led to this, "sitting by." I must confess that I did not reckon on so large a blessing as I have already seen as the result of that sermon. When I came here on Monday afternoon, that being Whit-Monday, when everybody is supposed to take a holiday, I was surprised, on my arrival at about three o'clock, by a friend running up to me and saying, "We are glad you have come, Sir, for there is already a room full." There is quite a nice number of friends who have come forward from the congregation and who, one after another have said, "We cannot be sitting by any longer. We feel that we cannot remain among the sitters-by, but that we must come in and partake of the Gospel feast and join ourselves with the disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

This blessed result of my sermon has set the bells of my heart ringing all the week and I have felt deeply thankful to God for it. I said to myself that as I had taken one arrow, which had sped so well, out of that quiver, I would take another! Having spoken to those who are "sitting by," I think I will now speak to those who are *not* sitting by, but who, indeed, are the principal persons in the congregation, namely, those who are sick and sorry and who need the Savior. For this palsied man who was let down by ropes through the ceiling was the most remarkable person in that congregation! We may readily forget those Pharisees and learned legal gentlemen, but we can never forget this man to whom, as soon as ever they "let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus," the Savior said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I trust that, at this time, there are some present in this audience who are not sitting by, but who are already praying, "God be merciful to me!" Some

whose prayers are rising to Heaven in accents like these, "Lord, help me!" "Lord, save, or I perish!"

You are the principal persons in the congregation, both to the preacher and to the preacher's Master! He cares more about you and about what shall take place in you, than about any of the Pharisees or doctors of the Law who may be sitting by. God is glorified in scattering His miracles of mercy where there is the greatest need of them. Our Lord Jesus, when the poor man was let down by his four friends through the ceiling, said to him at once, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." Matthew puts our Savior's words thus, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you," while Mark's record is, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." Well, Jesus may have uttered all of these words and all the different versions of the story may be correct, for it is not every man's ear that catches the whole of every sentence that is spoken, and we may be glad that there are three Evangelists who have recorded what the Savior said. There is no real difference in the sense—and the difference in the words may only show that Jesus said all three sentences.

I am going, on this occasion, to talk a little about this man, first, *before his forgiveness.* Next, a little more about his *forgiveness, itself.* And then a little about what followed *after his forgiveness*.

I. First, then, let us think of this man BEFORE HIS FORGIVENESS.

We are not told much about him. If I indulge in imagination a little, you will take it for what it is worth. This man, it seems to me, first, had faith which went out towards the Lord Jesus. Evidently, as I read the narrative, he had been suddenly paralyzed. This affliction usually comes up all of a sudden—men who have been about their business as actively as usual have been, in a moment, struck down with paralysis. This man appears to have been completely paralyzed, so as to have been unable to move and, as he lay in that helpless state, he heard that Jesus of Nazareth had come to the city—and he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was able to heal even him. It does not strike me that his friends would have brought him to Christ unless he requested it. The most rational explanation of the whole proceeding seems to me to be this—he believed in Jesus as able to heal him and he continued to cry out earnestly—and to pray that he might, somehow or other, be taken into Christ's Presence. He could not stir hand or foot, but he had friends—and he begged those friends to take him to Jesus.

Well now, there never was a soul, yet, that had faith in Christ but what Christ revealed Himself more fully in the way of love to that soul! If you know that you can not save yourself. If you believe that Christ can save you and if your one anxiety is to be laid at His feet that He may look upon you, and save you, He will assuredly accept you. "Him that comes to Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." Whether he comes running, or walking, or creeping, or borne of four, so long as he comes, Christ will accept him! And if his faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, our Lord Jesus will not let it die! If there is but a smoldering faith, He will not

quench the smoking flax. Do you believe this? If you do, let it cheer you and comfort you. There is already something that is well with your soul! It was better to be paralyzed and to have faith in Christ than to be walking upright like the Pharisees and lawyers who had no faith in Him! The apparent wretchedness of your condition is not the real wretchedness of it—it may even turn out to be the blessedness and the hopefulness of it! If you believe in Jesus, I care not how far you have fallen, or how great is your inability—if you believe in Jesus, you are brought into contact with Omnipotence and that Omnipotence will heal you!

This man, I believe, further thought that Christ could heal him, but *he began to feel his great sinfulness*. I am certain that he did because Jesus never forgives where there is no repentance. There was never yet the flat, "Your sins are forgiven you," until, first, there was a *consciousness* of sin and a *confession* of sin. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This man, lying there paralyzed, wept at the thought of his past life, his omissions and his commissions, his falling short and his transgressions! His heart was heavy within him. He seemed to say to his friends, "Get me, somehow, to the great Prophet! Get me within sight of this wonderful Savior! Oh, get me within a touch of Him, that I may be restored, that I may have this great load which presses me down so sorely, taken off my heart! Worse to me, even, than the paralysis is this awful sense of sin. Take me, oh, take me into the Presence of this Messiah, this Son of David, that He may have mercy upon me!" That I conceive to have been his condition before the Word of Pardon was spoken to him.

Next, being hopeful, himself, *he inspired those about him with hope*. Of course they would not have taken him to Christ if they had not had some sort of belief that, possibly, he might be healed. It is wonderful what sick people can do even when they can do nothing—how, when they seem to be utterly powerless—they find a strength in feebleness. Their very helplessness seems to be a plea where there is anything of generosity left in the heart of those who are near them. So this man pleaded, "I believe Jesus will heal me. I believe He will have mercy upon me—get me to Him, do get me to Him!"

They resolved to do it if they could and *he was willing to be carried to Christ*. Four stout stalwart men said, "Yes, we will get you to Him, somehow, though it is a difficult task, for the house is small, the room is crowded and there is sure to be a press about the door." "But," said the poor man, "oh, try to do it, for it is my only hope. If I could but get where Jesus could see me, He would look on me and save me. Oh, get me to Him, get me to Him!" The palsied man would make no dispute about how it was to be done, so they carried him to the door of the house. And then they said to the people crowding around, "Make way for this poor palsied man," and he would say, "I pray you, friends and neighbors, make way." But they would not. Perhaps they, too, had *their* friends who needed to be healed, or they, themselves, had an anxiety to hear the great Teacher,

so they pushed and pressed to get as near Him as they could. You see, those quibbling Pharisees and doctors of the Law had got in, first, and they blocked up the road. They are always in a poor sinner's way! What must be done? The poor man's bearers would have abandoned the task, I think, but he said, "No, do not give up trying to get me in! It is my only hope. Oh, get me to Him! Get me near Him!"

So, next, the man was *willing to be lowered into the Presence of Christ.* There was no other way but to go up those stairs outside the house and to take him to the roof. And he, not fearing as many would have done, said, "Yes, break it up and let me down." These four men, belonging to a fishing town, were adept in the use of ropes and they soon had their tackle ready and broke a way through the roof. As I told you in the reading [See "*Exposition*" at end of sermon—Ed.] I always feel pleased at the idea of the dust and the debris of the roof coming down upon the heads of the Pharisees and doctors of the Law! It always delights me to think that those gentlemen would have dust on their heads, for once, and since they were there, they were bound to have a little of it. Of course, when these gentlemen come to a place of worship, one feels bound to be respectful to them, but if they come at an untimely hour when there is any rough work going on, one does not feel any particular regret! If, when souls are being saved, these gentlemen should have their corns trodden upon, we do not even ask their pardon or make any apology! Such a work as Christ had to do could not stand still for the sake of reverence to the learned doctors of the Law! so the roof was broken up and this man, though paralyzed, was not afraid to be let down. It is probable that there were no outcries from him when they began to let him down. I think, if it had been *my* case, I might have been afraid that one rope would go a little faster than the other. But no, the man keeps still in his mingled paralysis and courage till down drops the pallet just before the Savior!

There he lies upon his mattress, on the floor of the house, *just before the Savior's eyes, exactly where he wanted to be.* Here I address myself to some who would give all that they have if they could but be brought under the eyes of Jesus. The one thought of such a sufferer is, "Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that He would look on me, cure my helplessness and pardon my sin!" What a wonderful picture this scene would make! The crowd is obliged to make way or else they will have to bear the man and his bed on their heads—so he is dropped down into their midst—and there he lies. The great Preacher has been preaching, but He stops. This is an interruption which is, indeed, no interruption to Him! His discourse is but broken off for a minute, to be illustrated with engravings, that men may see, in later years, that what they have heard is but the letter-press and that the miracle which is now to be worked shall be the engraving which shall convey the Teacher's wonderful meaning to all eyes! So the poor palsied man lies there before the Savior.

Is that where you desire to lie, dear Friend? In your deadly sorrow, sin and weakness, do you wish to lie at the Savior's feet? That is where I want you to lie and if you will to lie there, that is where you *do* lie. The Lord Jesus is in the midst of us, tonight, and you can at once cast yourself down before Him. Do so! Tell Him about your paralysis. Tell Him how sick you are, how sinful you are. No, you need not speak so that I can hear you—His ears will hear the whisper of your soul. Your heartbeats will be vocal to His heart and He will note all you say or feel in your inmost soul. Just lie before Jesus and as you lie there, what are you to do? This man did not speak a word, but, as I believe, he lay there repenting that ever he should have lived as he had done, mourning that he should have wasted his life and misspent his time. I think, too, that he lay there *believing*, looking at that wondrous Man and believing that all power was in Him, and that He had only to speak the word and the sinner would be, at once, forgiven! So he lay there, in the Presence of Jesus, hoping and expecting forgiveness and healing.

II. Now, in the second place, we are to consider THE FORGIVENESS ITSELF.

This poor paralyzed man had not lain there long before the blessed Master broke the silence and said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I think that the four men up on the roof, looking down to see what would happen to their friend, would hardly understand what that sentence meant! They had brought him to Jesus because he was paralyzed, but he had wanted to come, first of all, because he was a sinner! He desired to have his paralysis cured, but secretly, in his soul, there was another matter which they might not have understood if he had tried to explain it to them. It was his *sin* that was his heaviest burden! And the Savior, the great Reader of Thoughts, knew all about that sin, so He did not, first, say to him, "Rise up and walk," but He began by saying, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Observe that *the pardon of sin came in a single sentence*. He spoke and it was done. Jesus said "Man, your sins are forgiven you," and they were forgiven him! Christ's voice had such almighty power about it that He needed not to utter many words. There was no long lesson for the poor man to repeat. There was no intricate problem for him to work out in his mind. The Master said all that was required in that one sentence, "Your sins are forgiven you." The burden of a sinner does not need two ticks of the clock for it to be removed—swifter than the lightning's flash is that verdict of absolution which comes from the eternal lips when the sinner lies hoping, believing, repenting at the feet of Jesus! It was a single sentence which declared that the man was forgiven!

Next, remember, that it was *a sentence from One who was authorized to absolve*. He was sent by the Father on purpose to forgive sin—and do not imagine that He has now lost His authorization to forgive—for, "He has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Jesus is appointed as

High Priest on purpose that He may stand on God's behalf and declare the remission of sin. What Jesus said was spoken with Divine Authority. It is vain for a priest to say to a sinner, "I absolve you." What can he do in such a case? He, or any other man who does not call himself a priest, may speak in his Master's name, and say to the penitent, "If you do sincerely repent, if you truly believe, I know you are absolved and I comfort you with the assurance of this absolution." So far, so good—but the Master, alone, can really give the absolution—it must come from Him who has power upon earth to forgive sins!

Now, my Hearer, have you never been forgiven? Are you in your pew and yet lying at that dear Master's feet—and do you desire above all things that He should say to you, "Your sins are forgiven you"? And do you believe that He *can* say it? And will you accept it from Him as being by Divine Authority? If so, I think He says it to you, for in His own Word He declares that they who believe in Him are forgiven. He says to each one of those who are penitent and believe in His Grace, "Your sins are forgiven you." Take the absolution and go your way! Do as Martin Luther did, in the days of his dark distress, when a brother monk said to him, "Do you not believe in the Creed, and do you not say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'? Now believe in the forgiveness of sins for yourself." Trust Christ's Word and you will be believing what is absolutely true! Trust it, take the comfort of it, and go your way! It is thus that Jesus Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the revealed Word of God, says authoritatively to each penitent, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Further, observe that this sentence, although it was but one, and was so short, yet was *wonderfully comprehensive*—"Man, your sins are forgiven you." Not one sin alone, nor many sins, but *all* your sins are forgiven you. When you go into particulars, you are apt to leave something out, therefore the declaration is made all-inclusive, there are no particulars given. "Your sins are forgiven you." Sins against the holy God? Sins against a righteous Law? Sins against the Gospel? Sins against the light of nature? Sins of this and sins of that kind? No, there is no enumeration. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from *all* sin." "Man, your sins are forgiven you." Murder, adultery, theft, fornication, blasphemy? Yes, in a word, "all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Man, your sins are forgiven you." What a far-reaching pardon it is! "Your sins are forgiven you." At one sudden sweep of the Divine wave of mercy, they are all washed away! There is no such thing as a half-pardon of sin. I heard someone talking, the other day, about original sin being forgiven, but the other sins left. But sin is a whole—it goes or it stays altogether—it cannot be broken up into pieces! It is all there or it is not there at all—and it is not there if you believe in Jesus! This blessed and comprehensive sentence sets free from every jot and taint and stain of guilt—"Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Observe, also, that *this sentence contained no conditions*—and the blessed Gospel, speaking to every repenting and believing sinner, gives

him absolute forgiveness. Behold, the tally is destroyed, the record of your debt is nailed to the Cross! And as for your sins, they are like the Egyptians when the Red Sea swallowed them up—the depths have covered them—there is not one of them left, however great or many they may have been. If you are now a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, He says to you now by His Word, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I pray the blessed Master, by His Holy Spirit, to make His Word come home to many here with power. Oh, that those dear lips, which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, did themselves speak to you! Oh, that those wounds of His which are mouths that preach pardon to sinners, might speak to you and say, "Your sins are forgiven you"! There is no mouth that speaks pardon like that gash in His side out of which His very heart speaks as He says, "I have loved you, and given Myself to death for you. Your sins I have borne on the tree and put them away once and for all. Man, your sins are forgiven you." Oh, that Jesus Himself might thus speak effectually to many of you!

But note that *this sentence sufficed the receiver*. When the Savior afterwards raised this palsied man to health and strength, He did not do it to let the man know that his sins were forgiven. The man knew that, already, and did not need any more evidence of it. But Jesus did it for another reason. To the scribes and Pharisees He said, "That you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house." Those unbelieving men had not evidence enough that Christ could forgive, but he to whom Christ spoke needed no further proof than the power of that voice in his own conscience! And if He shall speak to you, my Hearer, you will not need any books about the evidences of Scripture, the proofs of Inspiration and so on, to you—this indisputable miracle of pardoned sin shall stand forever as a holy memorial of God's mighty Grace! It shall be unto you for a sign, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off, that God has pardoned you and spoken peace to your soul—and this God shall be your God forever and ever! To every soul that is in a similar case as that of the poor palsied man lying repenting and believing at the feet of Jesus, His Word gives the comfortable assurance, "Believe, and your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." Believe it and go your way in peace!

III. Now I close by noticing, thirdly, what followed AFTER THIS MAN'S FORGIVENESS.

He was absolutely, irreversibly, eternally forgiven, for, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never plays fast and loose with men. He never issues a pardon from His Throne and afterwards executes the pardoned sinner! His pardon covers all that may come afterwards as well as all that has gone before. But what happened to this man?

I believe that, first, there was *an inward peace that stole over his soul*. If you could have looked into the face of that palsied man, while still pal-

sied and lying there in that hammock, you would have seen a wonderful transformation! Did you ever see a face transfigured? If you are a soul-winner, you have often seen it. All human faces are not beautiful—some are absolutely repulsive! The countenances of some who have lived long in sin are dreadful to look upon. Yet I have noticed faces that at first I could scarcely endure, when the persons have been gently led to the Savior, and they have perceived the love of God to them and have at last believed, and felt within their soul the kiss of peace, why, they have looked positively beautiful!

I should have liked to have had them photographed, only it was too sacred a thing. Speak of physiognomies—the Grace of God is such an eternal beautifier that the face from which you would have turned away in disgust and said, "There can be no good thing behind that countenance"—is absolutely changed by the Lord's mighty working! I say not that a single feature may be altered—the person may be the same in feature, but, oh, what a marvelous difference there is in the expression of the whole contour of the countenance when Free Grace and dying love have cast their magic spell over the spirit and the Holy Spirit has made the dead to live, and the person has been born again in Christ Jesus! Well, that change took place in this man's mind, I am sure it did, when Jesus said to him, "Your sins are forgiven you." He was in no hurry to be raised from his palsied state! He does not appear to have said a word and those scribes and Pharisees looked on with their malevolent countenances, but they did not frighten him—he lay quite still and was in no hurry, even, for the Master's next blessing. It would come in due time, he knew it would, and he was of good cheer, for had not Jesus said to him, "Be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you"?

But next followed *the man's immediate cure*. The Master said to him, "Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house." Our blessed Master was accustomed to preach the Gospel in a way which I have heard some friends greatly question. They tell us that we ought not to bid men to believe and repent because they *cannot*. There are two parties on opposite sides of this question—one says, "If you tell a man to believe and repent, that proves that he can," which I do not believe. And others say, "If they cannot repent, you ought not to exhort them to do so," which I also do not believe! Though I know them to be as helpless as that poor palsied man, unable to lift hand or foot, yet in the Master's name we say, as the Master was known to say, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." "Oh," says one, "I could not say that to an unregenerate man." Do not do it, Brother, if you cannot do it. Go home and go to bed—what is the use of you for such work? The man who can speak miracles is the one who is needed and the man who can speak as his Master has bid him speak!

Surely, the *faith* does not lie in believing that the man can, himself, do what he is told to do! The faith lies in believing that *Christ can do it* and, therefore, speaking in Christ's name, we say to the sinner just as the Lord Jesus did to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth your

hand," and he does so. Look at Ezekiel speaking to the dry bones in the valley. Ezekiel, do you believe that these dry bones can live? "Not I," he says, "I know that they are dead." The Lord says to him, "Ezekiel, prophesy to these dry bones!" How can he do it? It would be inconsistent with what he just said! "I have nothing to do with that," he says, "I was sent by the Lord to do it and I do it in the name of God." That which may seem perfectly inconsistent with your reason is quite consistent when *faith* brings in the supernatural element with which God moves those to whom He gives the commission to preach the Gospel in His name!

The Savior said to this man, "Arise, take up your couch, and go into your house." Now observe *his precise obedience*. "Immediately he rose up before them all." The tendency of a paralyzed person is to be paralyzed in will. There are some persons, no doubt, who have ailments that can easily be cured if they believe they can be cured because there is not much the matter with them, after all. But this man was completely paralyzed, yet he so fully believed in Christ that up he rose and stood before the Master! Then Jesus said, "Take up your couch." I think I see him undo those four ropes and quickly shoulder his mattress. "Walk," says the Master, and he walks! "Go into your house," says the Master. He might have stopped and said, "No, Lord, let me stay and hear the sermon out," but no, not a word did he say about it, but off he went to his own house!

Oh, that all were as obedient to Christ as this man was, that, having the simplicity of faith, they would render the fullest obedience! But thus it often is that the very chief of sinners, when pardon is given to them, have given to them, at the same time, a tender conscience, a willing mind, a yielding spirit. "Whatever He says to you, do it," said the virgin mother to the servants at Cana of Galilee—and that is good advice for you! If Christ has healed you, obey Him! Obey Him at once, obey Him exactly, obey Him in everything, be it little, or be it great! If some say it is nonessential, remember that *what is not essential to salvation may be essential to obedience*! Do it if Jesus commanded it! Do it whether it appears to you to be essential or not! That is not a question for you to ask—that is a heartless, loveless question. He has healed you, do *what* He bids you, *as* He bids you, *when* He bids you—and raise no question about it. Take up your bed and go into your house, if so He bids you. Or, if He puts it to you, "He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved," believe *and be baptized*. Be obedient unto Him who deserves to be obeyed!

Now, lastly, this man, it is said, "immediately rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house *glorifying God*." I think I hear what he said. "Glory!" he cried, "Glory be to God!" He felt so glad, so happy, that he took up his bed before them all and, as he walked along, he glorified God. And would you not have done the same if you had been paralyzed and had been restored as he had been? And *will* you not do so? If you have been sin-bound and Christ has set you free, surely you will take the earliest opportunity of telling others what Jesus has done for you and seek to glorify His name! I did not won-

der when a Brother lately said to me, "I have been spending all the morning in the workshop telling the men that I have found the Savior." And one, last Sunday, turned to his wife in this Tabernacle and said, "I am saved!" She said to him, "Don't disturb the worship," but I almost wish he had done so! What a mercy it is to be saved! Salvation puts a new sun in our sky and a new joy in our hearts! Believe on Jesus and this salvation is yours! God grant that it may be, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 5:12-26.

Verse 12. *And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy.* As far gone with leprosy as he could be—thoroughly tainted and eaten up with that loathsome disease.

12. *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* He felt that the difficulty lay in the *will* of Christ, not in His power. No other teacher would have looked at such a man! Everybody shrank from him, for he scattered defilement wherever he moved. A leper was a being from whom all kept clear, so this one was afraid that the great Teacher was not willing to cure him. "If You will," he said, "You can—I know that You can make me clean."

13. *And He put forth His hand, and touched him.* This was a wonderful instance of condescending love on the part of the Lord Jesus and touching the leper did not defile Him. On the contrary, Christ removed the defilement from the leper—"He touched him,"

13. *Saying, I will: be you clean.* It was the will of Christ that worked the miracle, that secret movement of the heart of Christ, that silent Omnipotent going forth of Divine Energy that accomplished the leper's cure!

13. *And immediately the leprosy departed from him.* Christ can heal sin in the same way that He cured this leper. If He touches the worst man in this place, He can make sin to depart from him the moment He touches him. It does not require years in order to perfect the work of salvation—it can be done in a moment! Such is the wonder-working power of Christ—"immediately the leprosy departed from him."

14. *And He charged him to tell no man: but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* Our blessed Master did not court fame. He did not wish to make Himself notorious—the crowds that flocked around Him were inconvenient to Him, so He did not wish to have them increased. There was danger in such crowding and Jesus was wise in His generation, so He charged the healed leper to tell no man, but to show himself to the priest and to present the offering required under the Law.

15. *But so much the more there went fame abroad of Him.* Fame is like fire. If you heap anything on it to prevent it from spreading, it often acts as fuel to the flame! So, the very effort to hide the light of Christ's power made it spread all the more widely.

15. *And great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* I wish that all congregations would come together from the same motives—to hear and to be healed by Christ! What is your disease, my Hearer? What ails your soul? What is the mischief in your spirit? What is the malady in your heart? Jesus can heal you! Oh, that you would at once seek to be healed by Him!

16. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.* Just when there were such grand opportunities of doing good, just when everybody sought Him, does He go away from them into the wilderness to *pray*? Yes, because He felt what we ought to feel but often do not, that He needed fresh power, that as the servant of God He must wait upon God for fresh power for His great life-work. "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed." No doubt it was the constant habit of Christ to pray, but there were certain special times when He retired into lonely places and His prayer was peculiarly fervent and prolonged.

17. *And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* The word, "them," scarcely gives the right sense of the original. It should be, "the power of the Lord was present to heal." Jesus did *not* heal the Pharisees and doctors of the Law, but He healed many of the congregation. Now, how do you account for this power present to heal? Why, by that wilderness prayer—"He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed," and afterward, in a very high and remarkable manner, "the power of the Lord was present to heal." And when the power to heal was present, the patient to be healed was very soon present, too!

18, 19. *And behold, men brought on a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus.* There appears to have been, according to Mark, some breaking up of the material that formed the roof of the house where Christ was. It was not altogether such an easy matter as some have imagined, to let this poor palsied man down into the Presence of Jesus. And if some of the dust from the roof fell down upon the Pharisees and doctors of the Law who were sitting by, it would only be what they were accustomed to throw into other people's eyes!

20. *And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you.* Christ has eyes with which He can see faith. You and I cannot see it, but He can—"When He *saw* their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you." This was going to the very root of his disease. Jesus knew what really ailed the man—he was palsied in spirit as well as in body—and Christ removed the root of his disease by forgiving his sin.

21. *And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason.* The gentlemen I alluded to, just now, began to reason. It was just like them—instead of beginning to *praise* God, they "began to reason"—

22. *Saying, Who is this, which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts?* See, Jesus can perceive *thoughts*! I have heard of "thought-reading"—here is a true specimen of it—"Jesus perceived their thoughts and said unto them, What reason you in your hearts?"

23. *Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk?* Anyone can say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or, "Rise up and walk." But to forgive sins, or to give the power to rise up and walk, equally needs God! If God is present and can make the palsied man arise and walk, He is also able to forgive his sins.

24-26. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up you couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear.* With awe, and reverence. They felt that God had come very near to them and they, perhaps, said, like Jacob of old, when he was afraid, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." They were filled with fear—

26. *Saying, We have seen strange things today.* Oh, that we might see such "strange things" in this house, tonight, and whenever we meet to worship God!

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.

"ALL OF ONE"
NO. 2418

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 23, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 5, 1887.

"For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Your name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto You. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children whom God has given Me."
Hebrews 2:11-13.

AT the commencement of our discourse, it will be most fit and proper for us to enquire whether we have any interest in the Truths of God mentioned in the text. The Apostle here speaks of those who are sanctified and of the great Sanctifier. Come, my Hearer, do you belong to the sanctified? Have you any part or lot in this matter? What does it concern you that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are, "all of one," if you are not one of them? The more glorious the privileges of the Gospel, the more doleful is your state if they are not yours! If you have no share in this wondrous union between Christ and His people, what we have to say will affect you but little. Indeed, it will not even interest you—and why should it?

What is meant by the expression, "being sanctified"? The essential part of sanctification means being set apart for holy uses. That which was meant to be used for God, alone, was sanctified, set apart, regarded as holy. The vessels of the sanctuary were sanctified when they were used only by the priests in the service of God. Of course there arose out of this fact, which is the essence of sanctification, the further quality of purity, for that which is dedicated to God must be pure, that which is reserved for His service must not be defiled, it must be clean. We cannot imagine the Holy God using unholy vessels in His sanctuary—so that sanctification comes to mean purification—the making of that to be holy which was, first of all, set apart for holy uses. Holiness of character follows upon holiness of design. First we are set apart for God's use and then, afterwards, we are made pure that we may be fit for God's use.

Well, then, dear Friends, are you sanctified? I have heard some make a jest of that word and jeer at certain persons as, "saints." They might as well call them kings and princes, and then mock them, for there is nothing mean or despicable in the name, "saint." It is one of the most glorious titles that a man can ever wear! "He was a sanctified sort of person," says one, meaning, thereby, I suppose, sanctimonious, hypocritical and pretentious. Yes, but *that* is not the true meaning of the word and I fear lest the jest at the word, "sanctified," only proves that there are many who, so

far from claiming to be sanctified, do not even wish to be! It is the last thing that they would desire, to be made holy, and set apart for Divine purposes.

But, Beloved, all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ aspire to be dedicated and consecrated to God! "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." You hear a voice which says to you, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." You understand that the Lord's children are expected to be a peculiar people, zealous for good works—

"Only reserved for Christ that died,
Surrendered to the Crucified."

Are you, then, a member of that blessed society? Do you desire to live to God? Are you anxious to be so pure in character that God can accept your service and use you for His work? Well, then, it is for *you* that the words of our text are written. May you drink the encouragement out of them and be, thereby, refreshed!

No man is truly sanctified unless he is sanctified by Christ. The Holy Spirit is made the Agent of our purification, but it is *in Christ* that we are, first of all, set apart unto God, and it is by His most precious blood, applied to us by the Spirit of God, that we are made clean and pure so as to be used in the Divine service. Believers are the sanctified and Jesus Christ is the Sanctifier. I am not going to say more about that glorious Truth at this time, but I am going to dwell upon the very important statement made here, "He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one." This is a truly wonderful expression—they are "all of one." Note, therefore, first, *the remarkable unity of Christ and His people.* And then notice *the Lord Jesus Christ's expressions which prove this wonderful unity.*

I. First, then, consider THE REMARKABLE UNITY BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE. They are "all of one."

They are, first, "all of one" *in the Divine design* in the great mind of God. It is not Christ, alone. and His people. alone, but Christ and His Church who are regarded as "all of one." They are fitted, constituted, designed for each other. They are the complement of each other. In the Divine mind it was not the Christ, the Anointed, as the Head apart from the whole body adown which the holy anointing oil should flow—it was the Head with all the members of His mystical body that the great Father saw. When the Divine Mind—and we have to speak here after the manner of men, for God is not known to us so that we can speak of Him otherwise than after the fashion of our poor ideas—when the Divine Mind conceived the plan of man's redemption, purification and setting apart for His service, God had this one thought. We make it two, but it was only one to Him—Christ, the First-Born, and the many brethren as succeeding Him in their heavenly birth—being brothers unto him and being made like He. The Eternal Father thought not of Christ without the Church, nor of the Church without Christ!

When we speak of Christ, now, we are not speaking of Him only as the second Person of the blessed Trinity, "very God of very God," but we are thinking of Him in His complex Character as being both God and Man, the one Mediator between God and men. Now, the very idea of a Mediator implies that there shall be men for whom He shall mediate with God. The very thought of a Savior implies that there shall be persons whom He shall save. And the idea of men needing to be saved, also, somehow implies Christ, who alone could save them. To the Divine Mind it was so. God made man in His own image, after His likeness, and His thoughts were even, then, fixed upon the Christ. And when He new-makes men, it is with the intention that they shall again be conformed unto His image. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is." In the mind of God it was settled that there should be a race of beings who should serve Him, of whom His own Son should be one—very God, but yet, at the same time, truly Man—and He did not think of His Son in that complex relationship otherwise than as being the Head of a vast community—the perfect Image to which multitudes of others should be conformed!

I cannot fully bring out the thought that I see in the text, for here we are in the great deeps. But the more you shall turn this Truth over, the more you will discover that from of old God ordained Christ and His people as parts of one wondrous plan. It was not, as some have tried to represent it, that Jehovah made a mistake by creating men who fell into sin and that He *then* adopted an expedient by which He restored them. No, the whole scheme of redemption is all part of the great eternal system and plan matured in the Divine Mind that by redeeming love, manifested in the Person of His well-beloved Son, the Lord might create unto Himself a people who should forever be one, akin unto Himself, and like unto the Well-Beloved. It was to find fit comrades for that mysterious Person whom He of old ordained—and it was to find for those comrades a fit Leader and Head—that He constituted Christ the Man, and yet God, to be the Mediator between God and men. They are one, they are, as our text says, "all of one," in the Divine Design. And the Divine Design cannot be accomplished without the glorification of Christ, nor yet without the glorification of His people! They are one in the Divine Purpose and if either the one or the other could fail, the purpose of God would break down—but that cannot be!

Then, next, they who are sanctified and the Sanctifier, Himself, are "all of one" *in the Eternal Covenant*. When the Lord Jesus Christ became the Surety of the Covenant, the Head and Representative of His people, He struck hands with His great Father in a solemn league and Covenant and He did that, not for Himself, alone, but for us, also. That Covenant was made for us *in* Christ *with* Christ, as He is one with us, and now, today, Beloved, the provisions of the Covenant are as much for me as for Christ, and as much for Christ as for the very least of His people! They are regarded in the wondrous Covenant as being indissolubly one. That first Covenant with Adam was not with Adam, alone, but with all the innu-

merable hosts of men that were to be descended from Him. And, therefore, in Adam, when he transgressed, all fell and died. And that second Covenant, made with the second Adam, is not made with Him, alone, but with all the countless hosts of God's elect who were represented in Him and towards whom God entered into a league of solemn amity and of everlasting love with His only-begotten Son. Thus, they are "all of one" in the Divine Design and in the Covenant of Grace.

But there is something better than this, if there can be anything better, for they are "all of one" *as to nature*. Do not let us ever permit our hearts to lose the sweetness of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is really and truly one with us as to nature! In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and yet, notwithstanding that, He is Man of the substance of His mother. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." It is easy to say, but it is hard to realize that Jesus Christ is as truly Man as any of us can be. I mean, now that He sits exalted at the right hand of God, He is as truly Man as when He sat on the well and said to the Samaritan woman, "Give Me to drink." Do not let us exalt Him into only a God-man, for if we do, we shall degrade Him into a man-God! He is neither the one nor the other. He is God—diminish not His splendor! He is Man—Man such as we are—forget not His tenderness! In this very chapter, when we read that God has set man over the works of His hands and has put all things in subjection under His feet, does not Paul say, "Now we see not yet all things put under Him"? And then He adds, "But we see Jesus," that is to say, Jesus Christ is Lord—He is set on high, Head over all things. Well, then, says the Apostle, "This Jesus is Man, this is the Man that rules, this is the Man that is over all the works of God's hands because Jesus Christ is Man, the Representative of the human race, even in His majesty as King of kings and Lord of lords, Man in that relationship as well as in every other." Do not let us forget that Believers and their Lord are "all of one"—one indivisible race.

Yet further than that, I want you to notice that they who are sanctified and their Sanctifier are "all of one" because of *His representative Character*. Whatever Jesus did in the past, He did for us, for we are "all of one." He was circumcised and we are circumcised in Him with the true circumcision not made by hands. When He kept the Law, we kept the Law in Him, for He stood as our Representative. If He died, we reckon that we died in Him and, therefore, we recognize that we live because He lives. Now that He has gone into the heavenlies, it is as our Forerunner, and He has raised us up together with Him and made us sit together with Him in the heavenlies! And in all the Glory that is yet to come we shall be partakers.

Hence follows this further oneness. So are we "all of one" that, from now on *we are united in our interests*. His concerns and our concerns are one. We have not to speak of what is Christ's and what is His people's, but all that is Christ's belongs to His people, and all that belongs to His people belongs to Him! You are Christ's, Beloved, and Christ is yours! I am sure you cheerfully would acknowledge that you belong to Him—just

as joyfully acknowledge that He belongs to you! We have fellowship with Christ, which fellowship means a community of interests. His cause is our cause, His honor is our honor. If He loses, we lose. If He gains, we gain. We triumph when He triumphs, we feel disgraced when His cause is dishonored. Is it not so? "Yes," you say, "on our part we readily recognize that it is so." But it is far more so on Christ's part! He has so espoused you to Himself, O Believer, that you are His and all your interests are His! He who marries a wife takes her to himself and all her concerns are merged in his. But when Jesus Christ took His Church to be His bride, He took over all her debts and liabilities, all her burdens and all her necessities. She had not anything else to bring to her Husband, but He took all that there was—the mighty deficit of her lost estate—He took it over and more than compensated for it by the wondrous fullness of His own riches in Glory! And now there is no line of distinction between the two—"Both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one."

I do not know how to speak adequately upon my glorious theme! I have talked about it as it strikes me, but how to bring out its fullness to you, I do not know. I wish that you could sit still and enjoy it. Turn it over and see the many shades of color there are in this piece of the Divine Handiwork! It is like a diamond with many facets which will flash with light whichever way you turn it. Christ and you, "all of one"—all of you who are in Christ made one with each other by being one with Him! Not so blended and united as to become two in union, but *one*—having one nature, one body, one spirit!

"But we cannot receive the Divine Nature," says one. No, we cannot *be* Divine, but yet we can be partakers of the Divine Nature in all its moral and spiritual qualities. We are to become holy and we aspire to be perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect and, then, when we shall have reached that blessed point, we shall more fully have proved the Truth of God that we are "all of one." But long before we attain that height, it is still true, and always will be true, amidst all our infirmities and imperfections, that we are still one with Christ in nature and one with Him in all our interests! What He has done, He has done for us, and it is reckoned as what we have done in Him—and it is ours to work out the life of Christ in our own souls and to feel how truly all that is in Him is also in His people, as all the griefs and woes of His people have been reproduced in Him. "All of one!" I love the very words! Even without any exposition they are music to the believing heart—"Both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one."

II. Now, in the second place, I have to notice OUR SAVIOR'S EXPRESSIONS WHICH PROVE THIS WONDERFUL UNITY.

The Apostle says, "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He is glorious and they are often in shame and poverty, but He is not ashamed to call them brethren! There is an immeasurable disparity between the Lord Christ and His poor erring disciples, but there is no disparity which His love dwells upon, for He calls them brethren! Our hymn, just now, spoke of it as a wonder—

"That worms of earth should ever be
One with Incarnate Deity!"

And truly it *is* a wonder, yet such a wonder as Christ takes a delight in! "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." They are poor, they are despised, they are persecuted. What is worse, they are imperfect and faulty, often sorrowful, cast down, condemning themselves, groaning at the Mercy Seat—yet, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." There is such a unity between the Believer, be he in what sorrow he may, and the Christ, be He in what Glory He may, that He is never ashamed to acknowledge the close relationship between them—"He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Now, as this seemed to be a great thing to say, the Apostle felt obliged to quote three Old Testament Scriptures to show the brotherliness of Christ and His being "all of one" with us. The first passage that he quotes is in Psalm 22:22. Here you have it—"I will declare Your name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto You." The words in these quotations in our English version may not seem to be exactly the same as in the passages referred to, but we must remember, of course, that we are dealing with *translations* and not with the original writings. This is a part of that marvelous Psalm which was unquestionably the soliloquy of Christ upon the Cross.

Observe, dear Friends, this text is quoted to show us how we are "all of one," and it shows we are "all of one" because Jesus shares our worship. He says, "I will declare Your name unto My brethren." When He was here on earth, He told His brethren much concerning the Father. It was His mission to reveal the Father so that He could say, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." And when they worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth, it was because He had taught them to do so. His sermons inspired them with that devotion! He spoke to them as a man speaking to men and so He revealed God to them. This passage also shows that Jesus was one with His disciples, for He revealed God not as to strangers, but as to "brethren." He declared the will of God to them, not as to outsiders, but as to "brethren." He had one way of preaching to the crowd and He had quite another way of privately talking to His disciples. He declared the name of God unto His brethren in familiar, loving, tender tones, always putting Himself side by side with them, sometimes speaking of, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God," and always setting forth the great God as belonging as much to them as to Himself—and always speaking of that God, not as some renowned teacher might speak to beings far beneath Him, but as a Brother who has met with the Father, and tells of that Father to His brethren who, as yet, do not fully understand Him. "I will declare Your name unto My brethren." I say, therefore, that the life of Christ in His teaching and in His joining with His disciples in their worship of God proved that He was one with them!

Especially is this evident when we come to the last part of the quotation—"In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto You." Did Jesus sing? Yes, literally. After supper they sang a hymn. It must have been most thrilling to hear Christ's voice, quivering with emotion, singing the Psalms which constituted the Great Hallel. Those Psalms were usually

sung after the Paschal Supper was ended—and the Savior went through them, praising and magnifying Jehovah, joining the little band, I should think, Himself the leader of the Psalmody that it might be seen that He was "all of one" with them! I am the preacher to this congregation and when I speak to you of God, I am sure that I am "all of one" with you. If I speak aright, you might think that we were in a parlor rather than in the Tabernacle. I am not speaking as some great orator might, but as a Brother declaring the Father's name as best I know it.

And when the time comes for singing, then we feel that we are all at one with those who sing with us from the heart, following the same tune, and uttering the same praiseful words. Behold, then, in your midst, O Church of God, in the days of His flesh there stood this glorious One whom angels worship, who is the brightness of His Father's Glory in the very Heaven of heavens! Yet when He stood here, it was to join in the worship of His people, declaring the Father's name unto His brethren, and with them singing praises unto the Most High. Does not this bring Him very near to you? Does it not seem as if He might come at any moment and sit in that pew with you? I feel as if He already stood on this platform side by side with me—why shouldn't He? Oh, happy hour, if we could but see Him in very flesh and blood among us! Yet we know that He is here, even if we cannot see Him, for He has said, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world."

The second passage which is quoted by the Apostle is not very easy to find. "And again, I will put My trust in Him." I suppose the Apostle quoted from the Septuagint translation and there we get, in the 18th Psalm, at the second verse, these words, "I will hope in Him." It is so rendered in that version, but Paul read it, "I will put My trust in Him." We believe that is the passage he intended to quote. Now we are told by Inspiration in this place that this verse is the language of Christ and if so, it brings Him very near to us. The Psalm, itself, you will see, if you will read it through at home, looks as if it were David speaking, but we are here told that it was Christ. Well, it is no matter. Frequently in the Psalms you are unable to tell whether it is David or David's greater Son who is speaking, which very ambiguity is the source of instruction, because it shows how they are, "all of one," so that David, who is the sanctified one, speaks in such terms as might be used by the Sanctifier, Himself! The Book of Psalms is, indeed, throughout, one of the most wonderful proofs of how near the Believer is to Him in whom he believes, so that the very same words and phrases which were appropriate in the mouth of David, for himself, are equally appropriate if he speaks by way of prophecy concerning the Messiah.

Still, let me ask you to notice that the pith of the quotation is that *Jesus Christ put His trust in God*. That is to say, He was a partaker of *our faith*. It is by faith that we are justified. It is by faith that we overcome the world. It is by faith that we do everything. Had Jesus such a faith as that? Yes, He had—it was by His faith that He vanquished the adversary in that triple duel in the wilderness! It was by faith that He prevailed in prayer on the lone mountainside! It was by faith that He went up to the

Cross, alone, by Himself, for His people! I will go further and say that Jesus Christ is still to us the greatest Exemplar of faith. "What?" you exclaim, "in Heaven, is He still our greatest Exemplar of faith?" Yes—"from henceforth expecting till His enemies are made His footstool." And what is expectation based upon but upon faith?

Moreover, our blessed Lord is always engaged in intercessory prayer. Remember this text—"Ask of Me and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance"? He is asking and He is asking in faith. And the life of Christ, now, concerning His coming, His Kingdom and the ultimate triumph of His righteous cause, is still an exhibition of faith—and this makes Him very near of kin to us. Do You believe, my Master? "Yes," He says. Then, as I, also, believe, we are both Believers and we are "all of one."

Now, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, does not this bring your Lord very near to you? Why, as if to show you that He came very near to you, there is one point that some Believers omit, but which Jesus did not omit. It is described in that familiar passage, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Surely, His was a case where Baptism might fitly have been omitted! But, no—He comes to Jordan and He asks John to baptize Him. And when the good man says, "I have need to be baptized of You, and come You to me?" yet the condescending Savior, that He might be "all of one" with us, said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." Blessed are you who follow the Lamb wherever He goes! Happy are you who in all things desire to be like unto your Head, even as He, in all things, has been made like unto you. Are you tried in your faith? So was He! Are you tempted? So was He! Temptations of the worst kind assailed the purity of His Nature, as they assail you. But He stood and you shall stand! He overcame by the use of, "It is written," and that same Sword of the Spirit is ready to your hand! Use it, by faith, and so overcome the Wicked One.

The last passage which the Apostle quotes is taken from Isaiah, the eighth chapter and the 18th verse—"Behold I and the children which God has given Me." This is yet to be fulfilled. I have shown you Christ as He *was* one with us and Christ as He *is* one with us. Now you shall see Christ as He *is to be* one with us. There shall be a day when He shall be manifested. At this hour, He is the hidden Christ, and our life is hid with Him. But He is one day to appear. Then will He say, "Behold, here am I," and all shall see Him—even they who crucified Him—shall behold Him when He comes in His Glory.

Observe that, in that day, *He is to appear with His children*—with those who have received life out of His life, those to whom He is the Adam, the true Father, the Everlasting Father. He shall not appear alone—He would not care to do so. He shall be manifested with His saints! When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him. "Behold," He says, "I and the children." You see, He glories in them! He uses a phrase such as you would use of *your* children, a comely group, perhaps, of little ones, or perhaps, of grown-up sons and daughters. It is some high anniversary—suppose it is your golden wedding, and the glory of the day is

not yourself alone, but the children. When you kneel together at the family altar, you say, "Lord, behold, here am I and the children You have given me." You would not be half so happy if you could not mention their names, they are so dear to you! Well that is how Jesus puts it—"Behold I and the children."

And then He uses such a sweet phrase about them. He says, "the children which God has given Me." You know that, in the 17th of John, in that wonderful prayer of our Lord to His Father, He always calls His disciples, "those whom You have given Me." He likes to dwell on that fact! They are precious to Him in themselves, but far more precious as the Father's gift to Him! Some things are valued by you as keepsakes given by one you love and so are we dear to Christ because His Father gave us to Him! "The children which God has given Me." Sweet, sweet words! But do they not show you what oneness there is between Christ and His people? The father and the mother are marvelously one with their own children when those children have not grieved them, but have made them happy, so that they can speak of them as the children that God has given them! Then you see how they are knit together as one. That is a wonderful expression that is used concerning David, where Abigail said that his soul should be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord his God. So is it truly with all the Lord's redeemed—they are bound in the bundle of life with Christ and He says—"Behold I and the children which God has given Me."

It seems to imply that He would feel Himself bereaved if they were not there. If He could not say, "I and the children which God has given Me," He would be like Naomi when she came back from Moab and said, "Call me not, Naomi. Call me Mara," for she had lost her children. Shall Jesus, the great Father of the age, lose any of His redeemed? Shall He fail to see of the travail of His soul? Shall the children born of His agony and passion, after all, expire, or be taken from Him? Never! Glorious Christ, at the last, You shall say, "Here am I and the children which God has given Me."

Our Lord appears, by these words, to call the world's attention to His people together with Himself. "Behold," says He—not, "Behold Me," but, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given Me are for signs and for wonders." Jesus will be nothing except His people are there with Him, even in the Great Day of His appearing! Oh, I feel as if I could stop and ask you to sing those lines of which dear old Rowland Hill was so fond—

"But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He'll not live in Glory and leave me behind."

Jesus will not have Heaven without us! He will not have His Crown without us! He will not have His Throne without us! He will not have the Father's House without us! He will not go unto His rest without us, for He has made us to be part of Himself—we are "all of one." Just think of Christ without His people. A head without members of the body—what a ghastly sight! A shepherd without sheep—what an unhappy person! A father without children—what a desolated heart! No, no, it shall not be so! Christ is one with His people and "who shall separate us from the love of

Christ?" Well may I answer with the Apostle, "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."

O people of God, be as happy as ever you can! Rejoice in the Lord "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." If you should be so full of joy as not to be able to contain yourselves, you would not be more happy than you are warranted in being by the blessed Truth of God which I have set before you, that Christ and you are "all of one."

As for you who have no part nor lot in this matter, God have mercy upon you and bring you by faith to look to Christ, and to be joined forever to Him, for His dear sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 22.

You will not need any comment on this Psalm if, while we read it, you see Christ on the Cross, and you think that you hear Him uttering these sacred words. This Psalm is dedicated "to the Chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, or, the hind of the morning," for Jesus brings the morning with Him whenever He comes.

Verse 1. *MY God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* It was not morning with Jesus when He uttered these words—it was midnight—but His midnight is our morning.

1. *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?* The prayer had come to be almost inarticulate, like the dying moan of a wounded beast in the forest.

2. *O My God.* This is the third time He has cried out, "My God." Note that.

2. *I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.* The worst grief of a child of God is not to be heard in prayer. Think, then, what it must have been for the Well-Beloved to have to say to His Father, "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

3. *But You are holy.* He would bring no charge against God even though He forsook Him.

3-6. *O You that inhabits the praises of Israel. 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.* Think that you hear your Lord saying this and comparing Himself to a little red worm which, when crushed, seems to be nothing but a mass of blood.

6-8. *A reproach of men, and despised of the people. 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.* What scorn! How it must have entered like vitriol

into the veins of Christ—a strong corrosive of dreadful sarcasm without a drop of pity mixed with it!

9-11. *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. Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.* God had taken care of Christ in His infancy—that miraculous birth of His was under Divine control—will not the Lord care for Him, now that He is even more weak and nearer to the gates of death than in the first morning of His infant weakness?

12. *Many bulls have compassed Me.* There they stood, the strong legionaries of Rome, proud priests of Judea, and the princes of the people, all thirsting for His blood!

12-14. *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.* Dissolved, separated like drops of water poured out of a vessel.

14. *And all My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax.* "The very fountain of My strength is turned to weakness."

14, 15. *It is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death.* Fever had worked upon Him. The hanging in the midday sun, the excruciating pains in His hands and feet, the dragging weight of His body, the tearing of the nails and the continually increasing agony of His wounds had brought Him into the very dust of death.

16. *For dogs have compassed Me.* The many, the vulgar multitude, like a pack of hounds, crowded around the Savior on the Cross.

16. *The assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet.* David could never say this of himself—no one else but our Lord Jesus Christ could talk after this wondrous fashion. Yet this Psalm was written hundreds of years before Christ came here among men—and the Jews treasured it up, little understanding that it described their Messiah and ours—and described Him literally, too.

17. *I may count all My bones.* Jesus could look down upon His own emaciated person as He hung there naked upon the Cross.

17. *They look and stare upon Me.* Their cruel inquisitive gazing galled His delicate sensitive Nature.

18-21. *They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture. But be not You far from Me, O LORD: O My Strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth: for You have heard Me from the horns of the wild oxen!* He had been heard in past years and He pleads for similar acceptance now. He encourages His faith by a retrospect of God's preserving power in former dangers.

22. *I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.* A gleam of sunlight now comes over the Cross. the thick darkness is melting away and the Savior is triumphing even in His dying hour! He is passing away from the agonizing cry, "Why have

You forsaken Me?" to His last victorious utterance, "It is finished!" A wonderful change comes over the Savior's expressions from this point.

23, 24. *You that fear the LORD, praise Him; all you the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all you the seed of Israel. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard.* Here is the testimony of One who suffered more than all of us put together will ever suffer! He endured the hiding of God's face and yet He lives to declare the faithfulness of God! He says that when He cried unto His Father, He heard Him.

25. *My praise shall be of You in the great congregation.* It is so, here, this evening—Christ is praising God in this congregation! As we read these words of His dying testimony, we, too, are encouraged to believe that the God who heard Him will hear us and deliver us!

25, 26. *I will pay My vows before them that fear Him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek Him: your heart shall live forever.* He is talking the matter over to Himself and comforting Himself with the prospect of the results of His suffering. He sees the vast numbers of people who will be saved through His atoning Sacrifice, He sees the meek ones coming to His feet and He is happy. Because of the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.

27. *All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You.* He talks of the LORD and He talks to the LORD—"Before You." He talks about God's Glory and about the salvation of the heathen, and about all nations worshipping the one true God.

28-30. *For the Kingdom is the LORD'S: and He rules over all the nations. All they that are prosperous upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him: and none can keep alive his own soul. A posterity shall serve Him.* He Himself was like a seed about to be put into the ground that He might bring forth fruit unto God—and He cheers His heart with the prospect.

30, 31. *It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come.* How He rolls it like a sweet morsel under His tongue! "They shall come." Those great sinners, those far-off ones, "they shall come"—

31. *And shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He has done this.* Or, "It is finished." There the Psalm ends and that was the Master's dying cry.

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.

REPENTANCE AFTER CONVERSION
NO. 2419

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 30, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 12, 1887.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."
Psalm 51:17.

THE French have a phrase which signifies in English, "assisting at a service." A person who has been present at some grand function of the church speaks of himself as having "assisted" at the service. I want that many of us should literally carry out that expression just now. I do not want so much to preach as to lead you in the offering of sacrifices. Somebody says, perhaps, "But I have no bullock, no lamb." No, but you have a *heart*—and it is a *broken and a contrite heart* that I propose that we should present to God! I will not invite those of you to do so who have never experienced the working of Divine Grace within your souls. I trust that you will be led to do so by the Spirit of God, but I cannot, just now, invite you to offer that sacrifice, for my appeal is to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to those who have been restored from spiritual death, to those who are debtors to Free Grace and dying love. It is to them I speak and I invite and entreat them to accompany us while we present to God the sacrifices which He will not despise—the sacrifices of a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

I would have you specially notice that in this Psalm David puts the sacrifice in its right position—and I would put it in the same position. You observe that he has, first of all, sought pardon for his sin and he has found it. He has prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." His sin, then, is forgiven. He has, next, asked for a restoration of purity—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." That, also, has been done. I will suppose it, my dear Friend, to have been done in *your* case, also—that you have been renewed in the spirit of your mind by the Grace of God.

Then, next, *joy* has also been restored to David, for he says, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation," so that it is not a question with him as to whether he is saved or not—he is a man who is saved and living in the assurance of salvation! Sin is pardoned and the impurity engendered by grievous transgression has become put away. He has peace with God—he is the man who brings the sacrifice. He is the man who presents to God a broken heart and a contrite spirit. More than that, he has be-

come a preacher—his gratitude to God has led him to be useful to others, as he says in the 13th verse, "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You." And even more than that, he has gone from the pulpit to the *choir*—he has become a singer and he sings a sweet song of thankfulness to the great God who has saved him! Now, this is the man whose lips the Lord has opened and whose mouth is showing forth God's praise! This is the man who says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

Perhaps you have the notion that repentance is a thing that happens at the commencement of the spiritual life and has to be gotten through as one undergoes a certain operation—and that is an end of it. If so, you are greatly mistaken! Repentance lives as long as faith. Towards faith I might almost call it a Siamese twin. We shall need to believe and to repent as long as we live! Perhaps, also, you have the idea that repentance is a bitter thing. It *is* sometimes bitter—"They shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn," but that is not the kind of repentance that I am talking of, now. Surely that bitterness is past, it was all over long ago. But this is a sweet bitterness which attends faith as long as we live—and becomes a source of tender joy!

I do not know whether I shall quite convey my meaning to you, but I can assure you that the greatest joy I have ever known has not been when I have laughed, but when I have cried. The most intense happiness I have ever felt has not been when I have been exhilarated and full of spirits, but when I have leaned very low on the bosom of God and felt it so sweet to be so low that one could scarcely be lower and yet did not wish to be any higher! I quite agree with Mr. Rowland Hill, who said he supposed that there could be no tears of repentance in Heaven and that would be the only thing that he could almost regret, for sweet Sister Repentance is such charming company that we shall regret to part with her even at the gates of pearl. As we may have to part with her, there, I want us to keep her company all the time this service lasts! And my objective at this time is to ask you to bring to God, while we are here in this House of Prayer, the sacrifices of a broken and a contrite spirit. I want you to indulge yourselves in this most rare and exquisite delight of sorrow at the feet of Jesus—not sorrow for *unpardoned* sin, but sorrow for *pardoned* sin, sorrow for that which is done with, sorrow for that which is forgiven, sorrow for that which will never condemn you—for it was laid on Christ long ago and is put away forever! It is this sweet sorrow that I want you to indulge. Up with the sluices, then, Brothers and Sisters, and let these sacred streams of sorrow flow forth!

I. And, first, LET US CONSIDER WHAT THIS SACRIFICE IS. It is a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart.

If you and I have a broken spirit, *all idea of our own importance is gone*. What is the use of a broken heart? Why, much the same as the use of a broken pot, or a broken jug, or a broken bottle! Men throw it on the dunghill! Hence David says, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You

will not despise," as if he felt that everybody else would despise it. Now, do you feel that you are of no importance? Though you know that you are a child of God, do you feel that you would not give a penny for yourself? You would not wish to claim the first place. The rear rank suits you best and you wonder that you are in the Lord's army in any rank at all.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I believe that the more God uses us, the less we shall think of ourselves, and the more He fills us with His Spirit, the more will our own spirit sink within us in utter amazement that He should ever make use of such broken vessels as we are! Well now, indulge that feeling of nothingness and unimportance! Not only indulge it as a feeling, but go and act upon it! And be you in the midst of your Brothers and Sisters less than the least—humble yourselves in wonder that God should permit your name to stand on the roll of His elect at all. Admire the Grace of God to you and marvel at it in deep humiliation of spirit. That is part of the sacrifice that God will not despise!

Next, if you and I have a broken and a contrite heart, it means that *frivolity and trifling have gone from us*. There are some who are always trifling with spiritual things, but he who gets a broken heart has done with that sort of spirit. A broken heart is serious, solemn and in earnest. A broken heart never tries to play any tricks with God and never shuffles texts as though even Scripture, itself, were meant only to be an opportunity for testing our wit. A broken spirit is tender, serious, weighed down with solemn considerations. Indulge that spirit, now—be solemn before God, grasp eternal things, let slip these shadows—what are they worth? But set your soul on things Divine and everlasting. Pursue that vein of thought and so bring before God a broken and a contrite spirit!

Further, a broken spirit is one out of which *hypocrisy has gone*. That vessel, whole and sealed up, may contain the most precious oil of roses, or it may contain the foulest filth—I know not what is in it. But break it and you will soon see! There is no hypocrisy about a broken heart. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, be before men what you are before God! Seem to be what you really are. Make no pretences. I am afraid that we are all hypocrites in a measure—we both pray and preach above our own actual experience full often—and we, perhaps, think that we have more faith than we actually have and more love than we have ever known. The Lord make us to have a broken heart that is revealed by being broken! You know, now, what was in that pot, for there it lies, broken to shivers. Its contents are no longer concealed, they have all run out. Now, pour out your hearts before God as you sit there in your pews, and let Him see what He really does see—all that is in your soul—for in your hidden parts He would have you to know wisdom. Reveal yourselves unto yourselves and so reveal yourselves unto your God!

Once more, a broken spirit signifies that *all the secrets and essences of the spirit have flowed out*. You remember what happened when that holy woman broke the alabaster box? We read that "the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." A broken heart cannot keep secrets! Now is all revealed. Now its essence goes forth. Far too much of our praying

and of our worship is like closed-up boxes—you cannot tell what is in them. But it is not so with broken hearts! When broken hearts sing, they sing! When broken hearts groan, they groan! Broken hearts never play at repenting, nor play at believing. There is much of religion, nowadays, that is very superficial, it is all on the surface. A very small quantity of Gospel paint, with just a little varnish of profession, will go a very long way, and look very bright. But broken hearts are not like that—with broken hearts the hymn is a *real* hymn, the prayer is a *real* prayer, the hearing of sermons is earnest work—and the preaching of them is the hardest work of all!

Oh, what a mercy it would be if some of you were broken all to pieces! There are many flowers that will never yield their perfume till they are bruised. Even the generous grape lets not its juice flow forth till it is trodden under foot of men. Breaking and bruising are fit treatment for the nature of men, especially for the new nature. When God has put sweetness into our hearts, it is then that breaking develops the sweetness. Oh, to worship God in spirit and in truth! One has well said, "No one ever worshipped God with his whole heart unless he worshipped him with a broken heart. And there never was a heart that was truly broken that did not, thereby, become a whole heart." The divided heart is not broken, but the broken heart is never divided. I know that I am talking in riddles, but the wise will understand me. To get unity of spirit, there must be contrition and brokenness of heart.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US OFFER THE SACRIFICE.

I have told you a little of what the sacrifice means, now we will try, as God shall help us, to bear our brokenness of heart before the Lord. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us mourn for awhile on account of our past sin. We will do so from several points of view.

First, let us deeply regret that *we have sinned against so good a God*. While I regarded God as a tyrant, I thought sin a trifle. But when I knew Him to be my Father, then I mourned that I could ever have kicked against Him. When I thought that God was hard, I found it easy to sin. But when I found God so kind, so good, so overflowing with compassion, I smote upon my breast to think that I could have rebelled against One who loved me so and sought my good. Will you not now think of the goodness of God, Brothers and Sisters, and shall it not lead you to repentance? Shall we not feel within our hearts a burning indignation against sin because it is committed against so holy, so good, so glorious a Being as the infinitely blessed God?

Let me help you, again, and may the arrow pierce your very hearts this time! Let us mourn to think that *we have offended against so excellent and admirable a Law*. If the Law of God were like the laws of men, it might sometimes be a virtue to break it! But where a Law is so balanced, so perfect, oh, how could we have run contrary to it? Brothers and Sisters, the Law of God, when it says to us, "You shall not," only sets up a danger signal to tell us where it is injurious to go. And when the Law says, "You shall," it does but lift up a kindly hand to point out to us the

best and safest path. There is nothing in the Law of God that will rob you of happiness—it only denies you that which would cost you sorrow! We know that it is so and, therefore, we stand here and bow our head, and mourn that we should have been so foolish as to transgress, so willful and suicidally wicked as to do that evil thing which God hates and which so grievously injures us! We have nursed vipers when we have nursed sins! We have hatched the cockatrice's egg when we have thought upon iniquity! Therefore let us be truly sorry for our sin and for our folly.

You remember that I am talking to those of you who are saved, to those of you whose sins are forgiven. In my heart, I think that I can hear some others say, "Will you not let us join with you in repenting though we are not pardoned?" Bless your hearts, yes! God help you to join with us and if you do, you will find pardon, too, for pardon comes in this way! A broken heart can never long be divided from the broken Savior. You shall have peace with Him when you are at war with sin. But now I am especially inviting the people of God to sweetly grieve in this House of Prayer and offer the sacrifice of a contrite heart while they remember that they have sinned against God's perfect Law.

More than that—and this is a very tender point—let us grieve that *we have sinned against a Savior's love*. I like that verse we sang just now—

"'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Your sweet mercy's sake!"

The greatest crime that was ever committed against high Heaven was that crime of deicide when men nailed the Son of God to the Cross and put Him to death as a criminal! Where are the wretches that did this awful deed? They are *here*—I will not say that they are before us, for each of us harbors one of them within his bosom. "'Tis I"—"'Tis I have thus ungrateful been." How can I speak to you thus? Well, perhaps, all the better, because from my very heart I ask that we may stand together at the foot of the Cross and count the purple drops and say, "These have washed away my sins, yet I helped to spill them. Those hands, those feet, have saved me, yet I nailed them there. That opened side is the refuge of my guilty spirit, yet I made that fearful gash by my sin. It was my sin that slew my Savior!"

O sin, you thrice accursed thing, away with you! Away with you! Come, let us be filled with mournful joy, with pleasurable sorrow, while we sit beneath the bloody tree and see what sin has done—and yet see how sin, itself, has been *undone* by Him who died upon the Cross on Calvary! Beloved, the more you love your Lord, the more you will hate sin. If you often sit at the table with Him and dip your hand into His dish. If you lean your head upon His bosom with the blessed John. If you are favored and indulged with the choicest brotherliness towards the Well-Beloved, I know that you will often find occasion to seek a quiet place where you may shed tears of bitter regret that you should ever have sinned against such a Savior as Jesus!

Let me help you, again, however, while I remind you, Beloved, *of our sins against the holy Spirit*. Oh, what do we not owe to the Holy Spirit? I speak to you who know Him. It is the Holy Spirit who quickened you, the Holy Spirit who convinced you of sin, the Holy Spirit who comforted you! And oh, how sweetly does that Divine Comforter still comfort! Yet we resisted Him and grieved Him. Do you not remember, in your youthful days, how you strangled your convictions, how you held down conscience and would not let it reprove you? That blessed Spirit, whom we vexed and spurned, might have left us and gone His way, never to strive with us again, but He loved us so that He came and took up His abode with us and now He dwells in us! Within the narrow cell of our poor heart He has condescended to find a temple for His perpetual indwelling. O my Soul, how could you ever grieve Him? How could you ever have resisted that best and most tender Friend? I do not ask you to torture yourselves, but I do invite you, Beloved, to now indulge the joyful grief of sweet heavenly penitence as you remember the love of the Spirit.

Let us go a step further and *set our sin in the light of God's Countenance*. I speak to you, Beloved, who are God's elect. He loved you from before the foundation of the world and yet you have sinned against Him. He chose you from among men, of His own Sovereign Grace, and ordained you to belong to Christ, and gave you to Jesus to be His forever! Alas, you knew it not, and you continued to sin against this distinguishing and discriminating Grace! Oh, that even the elect of God could have done this! See that you crucify the sin that suffered you to act so shamefully. Then in due time you were redeemed. For you, Beloved, Jesus shed His precious blood! He shed it not for all men, but with a special view to the redemption of His elect. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He has redeemed us from among men! We have been the object of that special and peculiar redemption and yet against that dear Christ, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, we rebelled and transgressed! Ordained to be of the blood royal of Heaven, and yet a rebel! Ordained on earth to have the love of God within our spirit and, in Heaven, to behold His face forever—ordained by Divine decree to this high destiny—and yet for many a year a rebel, a willful rebel against such wondrous love as this! I do not know what to say to myself! I despise myself, I loathe myself, that I should thus have acted against such extraordinary love!

Then remember, also, that you are God's child, adopted into His family, His twice-born, Divinely regenerated. You are an heir of God, a joint heir with Jesus Christ. And yet—and yet you have acted so sinfully! O God, You have forgiven Your servants but we have never forgiven ourselves! And we never mean to—we shall always mourn, even in our joy for pardoned guilt, that we, the favorites of Heaven, should have so grieved the Lord!

Go a little further. I want you to *set sin in the light of your marvelous experiences*. Oh, there are some of us who, without boasting, can tell of answered prayer when we have come back from the top of Carmel and we have cried, "I have won the day!" And yet to us who have been privileged,

thus, to have power with God, it was not always so. Perhaps the very lips that now prevail in prayer were once habituated to blasphemy. Oh, mourn, my Brother, if it were so! Can you ever stop mourning? When John Newton wrote the Cardiphonia, or, *Voice of the Heart*—when he left us that choice treasure—I am sure that he must often and often have smitten upon his breast and grieved over the thought that he was once, in Africa, a blasphemer and everything that was foul and bad!

Oh yes, wonders of Grace have been ours! Wonders of Grace! Wonders of Grace! We have tasted the wines on the lees well refined—yet once we drank of the wine of the clusters of Sodom and Gomorrah! What has Grace not done for us, Brothers and Sisters? You and I have been in the King's banqueting house and His banner of love has waved over us! And our Beloved has caught us away, "from the top of Amana, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards," and manifested His love to us in the secret places where no eye saw except our own and His. There did He reveal to us His great love! Yet we were the very ones who once despised Him, broke His Sabbaths, refused to read His Word, neglected prayer, perhaps ridiculed holy things! We were proud, covetous, unholy—but we are washed, we are sanctified. Oh, let us sit here and sweetly repent, and present to our God the sacrifices of a broken and contrite spirit!

Besides, dear Friends, think of *the injury you have done to others by your example*. What a powerful preacher a mother is to her boy! What an influential preacher is a father to his son! What a mighty preacher one workmen may be to another, especially if he is a man of stronger mind than his fellows! Whatever any of us do, we are sure to have some who will copy us—it cannot be avoided. You are all writing copies every day, even though you are not schoolmasters and there are some who will learn either bad or good writing from you, for they will copy your handwriting. I mean, that they will imitate what they *see in you*. In years to come, when you have forgotten what you did, some may be following your former example. I would urge young men—and I am glad to see a great many of them present—to pray that they may begin life in such a way that they may not have much back reckoning.

Suppose a man to be converted after his children are born. If those children have seen the father do wrong, they will, perhaps, remember the evil better than the good example of their converted father. When your children have once left your roof, what opportunities of influencing them aright you have lost! Though you may, yourselves, be saved by faith in Christ, yet you cannot call back the boys and the girls from those sinful ways into which you led them in the days of your ungodliness! This thought has a sharp sting in it for any who, by word or by example, have taught others to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord. If this is your case, Beloved, while you praise God that He has forgiven your sin, yet mourn that you ever led any astray by your wrongdoing!

If that is not enough, I want to lead you a little further and bid you think of all *the opportunities that we lose whenever we fall into sin*. I re-

pent of sin unfeignedly because it has hindered my progress. I am now speaking only to the people of God, mark you. If any of you sinners want to creep in among them, you may, but I am especially addressing them. There is one here who, not long ago, was a pilgrim on the road to the Celestial City and he went part of the way up the Hill Difficulty, climbing splendidly on his hands and knees. He made the best of his way up, but it came to pass that when he had gone about half-way up the hill, he found a little arbor by the roadside. It was built there by the Lord of the Way that he might rest himself a little in it, and then go on his way. But this Brother sat down in the arbor and he sat on till he went to sleep. And he slept there, I do not know how long. Just lately he has been awakened and he has gone on his way, again, climbing up, but he has discovered that he has lost the roll that he used to carry in his bosom.

It was a roll that he had when first he started at the head of the Way and he meant to present it to the Lord of the Celestial City when he came to his journey's end. But he has lost his roll. You know what Mr. Bunyan says of this matter. It was getting late, but Christian had lost his roll, so he had to go back, and he wisely went back to the place where he had fallen asleep—all the way moaning and sighing and crying to himself, "I have lost my evidences, I have lost may roll. Where shall I find it?" He was so glad when he looked under the bench, to see the roll there. I guarantee you that he quickly picked it up, put it in his bosom! But then, you see, he had to go over that part of the road *three* times. If he had not lost his roll and had to go back, he might, by that time, have been much further on the road. There were lions in that region and that was ugly for him. If he had got into the House Beautiful earlier in the day, he would not have suffered the fears he now had. So he went along in a very sad state of mind and all because of that careless sleeping in the arbor. Oh, what some of you might have been if it had not been for your sins since conversion! What a preacher I might have been! What workers in the Sunday school you might have been! Oh, what winners of souls you might have become by this time! But you have been asleep and had to go back, perhaps, and so you have missed many opportunities of serving Christ.

Let us sit and think this matter over and begin to say, "Lord, we present to You a broken and contrite heart, mourning and lamenting, for if we are straitened, we are straitened in ourselves, not in You. If we are mourning in darkness, we, ourselves, made the darkness. If we are desponding, we have, in a large measure, created the despondency. Lord, we grieve and sorrow for all this." Since I have been in this house, tonight, I have heard of a dear Brother, whose prayers I remember among the first I heard when I came to be pastor of this Church. He passed away, today, and has gone to his reward, an old man and full of years. That Brother is where you and I will be very soon! Do not talk about *years*—they go so quickly and our friends pass away quickly, too.

Just the other day a man of God sat at his table writing. He had dipped his pen in the ink, but he never laid it on the paper, for he fell

asleep, then and there, and he was gone Home. We, too, shall soon pass away. "Perhaps in a few days I shall be among the angels"—say that to yourself, my Brother. Perhaps in a few weeks I shall behold the face of Him I love"—say that, my Sister. It will come true! Perhaps in a few years—no, drop the, "perhaps," and say—"Certainly, within a few years, I shall behold the Beatific Vision."—

"Father I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode."

I see myself walking over that street of gold that shines like glass! Earthly gold is dull, you cannot see into it. If you could, you would see the tears of the oppressed and, sometimes, the blood of crushed men in it. But the gold of Heaven is good and you can see into it, as you could into a sea of glass. I think I am walking there. I hardly know myself and there I meet one and another of you whom I knew, here, and we go together down that golden street and look in at the many mansions, from which come out many to welcome us, and we thread our way into the center. There is no temple there, no tabernacle of worship there, but we get into the center and we stand upon the glassy sea into which all the streets seem to run. And as we look around, we see angels and elders bowing there before the Throne of the Infinite Majesty, and we are there and we bow with them. And when we lift up our eyes to that Light, we sing, "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!"

Now I want you to *think of your sins in the light of that Glory*. Oh, how could those who are predestinated to these heavenly seats ever have wandered into sin? What? Was it so that we, who were born to behold the face of God, ever loved the theater and all its abominations? What? Did we, who were ordained to be peers with cherubim and seraphim, ever love the racetrack and all its gambling? What? Were we, whom God has made to be conformed to the image of His firstborn Son, ever seen to be drunk and staggering through the streets, defiled with unchastity, or polluted with gluttony, or guilty of covetousness, or cursed with pride? What? We whom the Lord has loved with an everlasting love and without whom Christ, Himself, will not be content to reign in Heaven, groveling in iniquity?

Oh, I think these questions must have helped to make sin seem contemptible and loathsome! I point at it the finger of scorn! O dear children of God, scorn your sins, lament your sins, weep over your sins! Indulge that feeling and God will accept it when it is mixed with faith in His dear Son, for "the sacrifices of God," that is, all sorts of sacrifices put together—sin-offerings, burnt offerings, peace-offerings, scapegoats and all together—"the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." One broken spirit is worth them all! "A broken and a contrite heart"—though there is but one such—"O God, You will not despise."

God bless you, Beloved, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51.

This is a portion of Scripture which can never be read too often. If any among us have never found mercy, let them use this Psalm as their own personal *prayer*—while those who *have* found mercy can read between the lines and read the sweetness of pardon into the bitterness of sorrow for sin! This Psalm was written by David when Nathan came to him after his great sin with Bathsheba. He needed Nathan to come to him to rebuke him. If David had not been in a very sad state of heart, he would not have fallen into the sin. It was that state of heart which left him so hardened, so obdurate, that he needed Nathan pointedly to say to him, "You are the man." After that, he wrote and prayed this truly penitential Psalm.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness.* He used to talk about being God's servant, but he says nothing about that, now. He used to speak of God's great love to him, but he cannot realize that, now. Yet he appeals to God for mercy—"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness."

1. *According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.* "There they are, they stare me in the face; nobody but You can blot them out; do it, Lord, for Your sweet mercy's sake. Blot them out of existence and out of memory. And when You have blotted them from Your Book of Remembrance, then blot them from me, too."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.* "If washing will not do, use fire, use blood, use anything, but cleanse me from my sin."

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me.* "Lord, help me. Here is my sin—I cannot shut my eyes to it. I dare not deny it, or excuse it. I make a clean breast of it. I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me."

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.* "I have sinned against others, but this is the foulness of the blot, the venom of the sting, that I have sinned against my God."

4, 5. *That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.* "Behold, for this is a wonder, and I look at it and I mourn over it. Behold, before I had a shape, I was out of shape! Before I saw anything, still there was sin antecedent to my very existence."

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* "But, alas, Lord, what You desire is not there. In my inward part I find falsehood! In my hidden part, I find folly! Lord, what You desire, You must also bestow, or else I shall never have it! Oh, hear Your servant's supplication!"

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* This is delightful pleading on David's part. He had seen the priest take the sprigs of hyssop, dip them in the blood and then

sprinkle the leper. So his prayer is, "Lord, give me purification through the Atonement. 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.'" It requires strong faith, when under a deep sense of sin, to be quite sure that God can put the sin away. It is a grand thing to be able to say, "Wash me, foul as I am, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* "Lord, I have heard nothing but groans, lately, and I have made no sound but sighs—'Make me to hear joy and gladness.'"

8. *That the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* When God makes us feel the weight of sin, it is a bone-breaking operation. He seems to strike as though He would kill—and only He that thus strikes can afterwards heal. Then He makes each fragment of the bone to sing and praise Him!

9. *Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.* You see that the Psalmist has many names for sin, for evil, like a great rogue, has many aliases. So it is sometimes sin. Sometimes it is transgression, passing over the line of right. And sometimes it is inequity, or a departure from perfect equity. "Call it by whatever name it may be called, Lord, let me be rid of it. 'Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.'"

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* "My Creator, I am spoiled. Come and make me over again. My heart has grown foul. You who did make me, clean me." The watchmaker best cleans the watch that he made. "Create in me a clean heart, O my Creator, and renew a right spirit within me."

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence.* "I have acted as if You were not present, but, oh, do not fling me away! Do not take Your Presence away from me."

11, 12. *And take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.* "Once I was so happy. Oh, give me back my joy!"

12. *And uphold me with Your free Spirit.* "I have fallen foully; let me not fall again. Henceforth, I cannot trust myself; You uphold me. I have been free to sin. Lord, send me a freer spirit, that I may be free to follow after righteousness."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.* He would turn preacher if God would but bless him! He would tell others what great things God had done for him.

13. *And sinners shall be converted unto You.* He felt sure that if he once told his tale of love, others would be melted and would turn to God—and no doubt it was the case.

14. *Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* "Once cleanse me from my sin and I will sing Your praises forever! And I will sing earnestly, too—'My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.'"

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* He felt as if he was going too fast when he promised to speak and to sing, so he prayed, "O Lord, open You my lips"—

15. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.* When good men have had a fall, they walk very tenderly afterwards. Once put them on their legs and they are very careful how they move. They are afraid to speak except as God opens their lips.

16. *For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it.* David remembered that under the Law there was no sacrifice appointed for the expiation of *adultery*. There were some sins that were left out of the catalog, and this was one of them.

16, 17. *You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* Even for the man who has committed the most atrocious crimes, there is still acceptance if he brings God the sacrifice of a broken spirit!

17, 18. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build, You, the walls of Jerusalem.* Now that he feels himself forgiven, he begins to pray for the good estate of the Church of God and the Lord's people everywhere! We cannot do that when sin is breaking our bones—but when we get peace and rest, then the first instinct of the newborn life is to pray for God's Kingdom—"Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build, You, the walls of Jerusalem."

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.*

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 KING CAN DO NO WRONG"
NO. 2420

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 7, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1887.

"And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatever the king did pleased all the people."
2 Samuel 3:36.

DAVID was a great king and a good king, but his character was compromised by the conduct of Joab, who had been one of his chief friends and supporters. Abner came to David, in Hebron, and proposed terms of peace which David accepted. But Joab could not bear that Abner should be his rival and, therefore, he most treacherously murdered him. This abominable act was greatly to the detriment of David's character—he could not prevent the crime, certainly he had not instigated it—and yet it was only natural that all the people would suppose that David had a hand in it because Joab was not merely one of his subjects, but his prime minister!

Dear Friends, in a similar way, the character of our great Lord and King among the sons of men is very much in the hands of His people, especially in the hands of those who are more prominent than others, and whom He uses in His service more than others. We may go and do, on our own account, things that shall bring dishonor to the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and King! He will have no part nor lot in them, nothing that He has taught will suggest them, and nothing that He desires will urge us, thus, to act. We may, however, of our own free will, even those of us whom the Lord uses most, bring grievous dishonor on His holy name. Jesus has often to lift up His pierced hands and when we ask Him, "What are these wounds in Your hands?" He has to answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." It is evident to each one of you that all the vile insults of infidels could never dishonor Christ as the inconsistencies of His own disciples! No slur ever comparatively attaches to the glorious name of the Well-Beloved from His avowed enemies, let them slander Him as they may. But a blot does fall upon His sacred name through the inconsistencies and follies of those who call themselves His disciples, but who are not truly His followers, or, being so, are not careful to walk consistently with their profession!

We may well pity David that he should come under the opprobrium of the conduct of such an one as Joab, for in his heart he was entirely clear of the murder of Abner. Yet rumor was quite sure to attribute complicity in the crime to him. Joab said to himself, "Abner has deceived the king. He cannot, after all he has done, be true in his professions of friendship,

so I will go out and slay him." And it is not at all an uncommon thing for us to dishonor Christ under the notion that we are showing our zeal for the King. We may be doing evil in the hope that good may come out of it! We may be indulging an unchristian, intolerant spirit in our zeal against intolerance! We may grow bitter in our love for love and in our hate of hatred! Such poor judges are we of what is right that we may even deceive *ourselves* into the belief that we are honoring our Lord and Master when we are, all the while, bringing disgrace upon His name! Perhaps Joab acted from this spirit and possibly some of us, at this very moment, are making the same mistake.

It is a grand proof of the stability of David's character that he did not suffer in the estimation of his friends because of what Joab had done. He ordered a public funeral for Abner. He attended it, himself, wrapped in sackcloth, and he compelled Joab to attend it. He, himself, fasted as a sign of the deepest mourning, and when the people came and begged him to eat, he would not touch food till the sun went down—he sacredly observed the time of fasting for the death of Abner, for whom he sang a dolorous song of real sorrow—"And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put into fetters: as a man falls before wicked men, so fell you." "And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatever the king did pleased all the people. For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner, the son of Ner."

Now, it is to the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ that His cause and His Character survive all the follies and all the sins of His professed people. There was an eminent minister who once said that Christianity must be true since it survived pulpits. And another one added that he felt more sure of its being true because it survived ministers, for, taking them all round, they were more likely to destroy than to build up the cause of Christ! These things were said only in semi-earnest, but there is a great deal of serious truth about them. The cause of Christ must be true because the Master has survived His disciples! His wisdom has not been eclipsed by our folly. His power has not been lessened by our weakness. The glory of His holiness has not been beclouded by the unholiness of His people. The sun has risen in spite of the many clouds. The morning has come notwithstanding the mists of the night. Blessed King, You conquer with the poorest soldiers that ever fought a battle and You get to Yourself the greater, rather than the less renown, because Your victories are won by such poor followers!

In Christ's conquests, it is never the soldiers' battle, it is always the Captain's battles and the Captain's victories. On His head are the many crowns of all who follow Him, for there is not one of them who has *earned* a crown. Their crowns are all deserved by Him and when they are given to them, by Him, they naturally and of right give them back to Him, crying, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created."—

"Not unto us, to You alone,

Blessed Lamb, be glory given!"

So, you see, our text has already led us into this profitable meditation upon our Lord! Good David, with his character in jeopardy through the wrongdoing of his prime minister, nevertheless passed through the trial, and his fame survived it. And the Character of our Lord Jesus Christ is such that, while daily put in jeopardy by us, yet it will still survive and His Kingdom will continue to increase—and His Glory will never wane.

This brings me, now, to dwell upon the second part of the verse—"Whatever the king did pleased all the people." Wherever this is the case with any king, we may say of it, first, *this is the outflow of love.* Secondly, *this is the consequence of knowledge.* Thirdly, *this is the secret of rest.* And fourthly, *this is the fountain of obedience*.

I. First, then, wherever it is the case that whatever the king does pleases all the people, THIS IS THE OUTFLOW OF LOVE—and as it is the case with our King, that whatever He does pleases all His people, we can truly say that this is the outflow of our love to Him. Let us dwell upon that matter for a few minutes.

Dear Friends, if we love the Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts, whatever He does will please us! We shall sum up all His past history in this one sentence, "He has done all things well." And we shall foretell His future history just as briefly, for, "He will do all things well."

Whatever our King does pleases us because we love Him and, true love, in the first place, *banishes suspicion*. When we do not love our rulers, we are afraid of the power that is over us. We think, perhaps, it may be exercised without tenderness, and we begin to tremble, lest, in some awful moment, the great foot should crush us, or the powerful hand should smite us. But when we truly love, we are not the victims of any such impression! No dark suspicions come across the soul that is once enamored of the Lord Jesus Christ. "No," says the heart, "He will not hurt me. He will not destroy me. He will not forget me." We cannot admit one ill thought concerning Him when, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, we have come to love Him. Love at once banishes all suspicions!

It also inspires *implicit confidence*. When we love Jesus Christ, our blessed King, we feel that He must do that which is kind, that which is tender, that which is right—and we do not need to ask Him any questions—we leave the whole matter with Him to do as He pleases. We are willing to let His will be like the apocalyptic book, sealed with seven seals, if necessary, and we unhesitatingly say, "Let His will be done." He who loves Christ much does not keep on asking for tokens, signs, evidences and manifestations!

That is an odd story, which is told of two Welshmen, but it has a great deal of truth in it. They were going out to preach and they parted at the crossroads, one to go this way, and one to go that. One of them said to his friend, "Brother Jones, may you get the Light of His Countenance in your preaching today!" "I hope so, Brother," he answered, "but there is one thing—if I do not get the Light of His Countenance, I will speak well of Him behind His back." Yes, just so! When we see His face, we realize

what a blessed Christ He is, but if we do not see His face, we are not going to find fault with Him! We believe in the truth of Kent's hymn—

"What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time, and to eternal days,
'Tis with the righteous well.
Well when they see His face,
Or sink amidst the flood;
Well in affliction's thorny maze,
Or on the mount with God!
'Tis well when they can sing
As sinners bought with blood,
And when they touch the mournful string,
And mourn an absent God.
'Tis well when on the mount
They feast on dying love,
And 'tis as well, in God's account,
When they, the furnace prove."

If Jesus smiles, He is my Lord, but if He frowns, He is my Lord just the same! "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That was a splendid utterance of Job when he reached that point and that is where true love always comes—it makes no enquiries or bargains, but it says, "My Lord is such a glorious King that I trust Him in the dark. I make no covenant or stipulation as to what He will do or will not do. I implicitly put myself in His hands and say, 'Not as I will, but as You will.'" This is the sweet effect of love—it banishes suspicion and inspires confidence—and thus it comes true that whatever the King does, pleases all the people.

Love also *suggests unquestioning reverence*. When you come to love your Lord as He ought to be loved, with a worshipping, adoring, reverential affection, it is almost like treason, even, to begin to enquire the reason for *anything* that He does! "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." Is He not a King? Is He not my Sovereign and am I not only His subject, but His beloved one, and shall I begin to ask questions of Him as if I were a stranger and He were a tyrant? As if I were under a foreign rule? No, I am His Hephzibah, of whom He says, "My delight is in her." And He is no more to me *Baali*, my lord, my master, but *Ishi*, my Man, my Husband! He has given Himself that name to show the closeness of His relationship to me and I must not, I cannot, I *would not* desire to raise any question about anything that He does! No, Lord, if it were possible, I would enlarge Your liberty to do with me and mine whatever it pleases You. Take no notice of my whims and wishes, I beseech You. If you were to notice them, they might be to my ruin. Let Your will be my will and Your wish, my wish. I most reverentially yield all to You. Thus, when we come to love our Lord so that we give Him His right place—and *we take our right place*—then whatever the King does pleases all of us who are His people!

Moreover, there is another beautiful feature about love, it *creates sympathetic feeling*. When we truly love Christ, our King, we are sure to be pleased with whatever He does. When our nature gets to be like His Nature—oh, what a blessed consummation that is! When our wishes and

His wishes travel the same road, though not with equal footsteps—when that which He aims at is that which we aim at after our poor fashion—when we can say that it is more delight to us that *He* should be delighted than that *we* should be delighted and that it is a greater honor to us to see Him honored than it would be to be honored. When we sink ourselves in Him, even as two divided streams, at last, dissolve into one—as I have seen a tiny silver brook come down to Father Thames and pour its whole self into him so as to be no longer anything but part of the great river—so, when our soul yields itself up in perfect love to Christ, to think His thoughts, and live and move in Him so that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us, oh, then it is that whatever the King does pleases all His people! Our heart has yielded up itself to Him and is perfectly content with that which He does, for it has no other will than that which lives in the Prince! When the Believer comes to be what he should be in the fullness of His love, his will is lost in the will of Christ. His very life is hidden away with Christ in God and then he realizes how true it is that whatever the King does pleases all His people!

Thus I have shown you that, in the first place, the pleasure of the people in all that the King does is the outflow of love.

II. That leads me, secondly, to notice that the love that manifests itself thus is not at all a foolish love, for IT IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE. Human love is blind, but the love which is worked in us by the Spirit of God is as full of eyes as are the great wheels of Divine Providence! There is the best of reasons why everything that Jesus does should please all His people—because everything He does is right—and we shall feel this in proportion as we combine knowledge with love, or our love is based on knowledge.

First, I suppose that *we know the Character of Christ*. Do you know it, Beloved? The God-Man, your Brother, and yet the Son of God—do you know His infinite tenderness, His boundless compassion, His unquenchable ardor of affection, His unfailing wisdom? If you have a true idea of who the Son of God is, who is now enthroned at the right hand of the Father, invested with supreme power over all things and always working for the good of His people—if you really know Him—then, whatever He does will please you! One who is so wise, so kind, *ought* to be supreme! He that is so good ought to be an Autocrat and to issue decrees of His own! Do we not all feel that it should be so? If it were otherwise, then we might quarrel with Him, but such a blessed Savior as our Well-Beloved is, why, we will not even in *thought* differ from Him, but we will feel that whatever He does, because of His great love, must please us!

Then, next, if we know Christ at all, *we know something of His designs*, and we know that He designs the Glory of the Father through the salvation of those the Father gave Him. He has laid Himself out to bring many sons to Glory. When we know that Christ's love has such sweet designs and that He has purchased our eternal salvation, how can we, after that, quarrel with Him? Now, we not only know something of His Character, but we also know something of His Divine intent and we, therefore, know that we may assuredly say, "All that You will, and all that You do,

O our glorious King, aim only at this one thing—the perfecting of Your own loved ones and bringing them Home to Your Glory! Do as You please, for we will never raise a question with You about anything that You do."

Furthermore, if we have truly become acquainted with Christ, *we know something of His modes of operation.* We have learned that it is His habit, often, to disguise Himself. His way is in the sea and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known except to those who are familiar with Him. We also understand that the bitterness is given to promote our sweetness and that, oftentimes, Christ's frown is but a covered smile. It is the way with Him to lead His people into the wilderness when He means to ultimately bring them into the rest of Canaan. Knowing all this, let us have no altercation with our Spouse, our constant Friend. If all this is true, and it is, then let Him have His way! If this is His way of giving us superior blessedness, we will, without question, yield to Him, for whatever the King does, pleases all His people.

Moreover, if it were not so, *we know something of our Lord's rights* and, therefore, we can never venture to interfere with His actions. Oh, what rights my Lord has over me! As I stand here, I confess that I am not my own, but that I am bought with a price. And you confess it, too, do you not, Beloved? Have you *any* rights apart from your Lord, you who are Christ's purchased ones? What if you are jewels? You are only jewels in His case. What if you have a will? It is a dangerous possession to have a will unless you yield it up to your Divine Controller. Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if he had been bought in the name of Christ and branded in the name of Jesus with a hot iron—to be Christ's slave forever. Shall you and I have any will in opposition to our Lord's will? If it is His will that we should be poor and despised, or that we should lie sick in bed, shall we raise any question with Him? Let Him have His will with us, whatever it is!

Some of you may remember the story Dr. Hamilton once told of a poor woman who said the Lord had taught her to yield herself absolutely to Him. She fell ill and she was bed-ridden, but she never murmured, for she said, "If the Lord wishes me to lie here and cough, I will lie here and cough. What He has done for me is so wonderful and so good that I cannot question His will, but I will yield myself up to Him altogether." "Whatever the king did pleased all the people." Yet this referred only to David—shall it not be so, when David's Lord is the King and we, redeemed with His precious blood—are the people who have to deal with Him?

So, in the second place, this pleasure in the King's actions is the consequence of knowledge as well as the outflow of love.

III. Thirdly, beloved Friends, THIS IS THE SECRET OF REST—"Whatever the king did pleased all the people."

If any of you are greatly distressed and troubled, I believe my text indicates to you where you can find rest. If whatever the King does pleases you, you may let down the anchor, for you have come into port! You will now be perfectly happy. To know that the King has done it and *to see His*

Divine hand in anything is more than half the battle, which ends in sweet content! If the Lord has done it, questions are out of the question! And truly, the Lord *has* done it. There may be a secondary agent, there probably is—the devil, himself, may be that secondary agent—yet the Lord has done it! It was God who afflicted Job, yet it was Satan who did all the mischief to God's servant with an evil intent. But the Patriarch could see God's hand in it all. So, whatever has happened to you, see the hand of God in it! A dog, if it is struck with a stick, bites the stick. Well, that may be all that we can expect from a *dog*, but you, who are no dog, must look to the hand that *holds* the stick, and not to the instrument with which you are smitten! And then you dare not bite the blessed hand that only intends your good in striking you. See God's hand, then, in all that happens to you, and that will help you on the way to a very blessed state of contentment.

When you have seen God's hand, then say, "*I would not have it otherwise than it is*." I know several persons who are always in trouble and unhappy because there is a dispute between them and God. I remember one to whom I solemnly spoke, years ago, and not long after, he passed away. I went to see his dying child, the only one he had left, and he said to me, "Do not talk to my daughter about death, do not mention it to her." "Well, then," I said, "if I may not to mention death, I will not go upstairs." The father said to me, "God could not take that child away." He had lost several children, before, and he said that if his daughter died, he would call God a tyrant, and I know not what. As last I stood before him and I said, "You are making for yourself a rod that is much heavier than God, Himself, lays upon you. I fear that you will, yourself, die if you act in this way."

As he could not be brought to reason, and kicked and rebelled against God's dealings with him, I was not surprised to learn that soon after his child died, he, himself, also died. It does not do to quarrel with God. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with other potsherds if they will, but woe to him who contends with his Maker! Instead of that, bow before Him, not simply because you must, but because you delight to acknowledge Him as your Lord. Are you setting yourself up as the judge of God? Do you dare to summon Him to your bar? Are you wiser, better, mightier than He? Oh, lay aside this rebellion, I beseech you! Sob if you will, but let it not be the sullen sob of one who will not yield, but that of a dear child who sobs himself asleep upon his mother's breast. Great God, You have done right in all that You have done! If we cannot prove Your wisdom, we know by faith that it is right, and we kiss Your hand and acknowledge that it is so with us that whatever the King does pleases all the people!

Well, now, if we can get as far as that—and God grant that we may—we are on the road to peace! Let us come, then, to this point, and *absolutely leave all things with Him as to the future*. "Whatever the king did pleased all the people" and if we are willing that our King should go on doing as He pleases, let us leave it so. I wish that our whole nature would consent to God's will, not one faculty, only, but our whole being.

Let all that God does please all of us. Yield your understanding, your will, your affections, your desires, your memory—yield *yourself* up fully unto the Christ who loves you—then shall you have perfect rest, but not till then!

It may be, dear Friends, that some of us will soon die—let us have no questions about that matter—but yield ourselves to whatever the King pleases. Perhaps some of us may live to an extreme old age, when sight and hearing will fail, and it will be undesirable to survive. Let us raise no question whatever about that. If it is so, let it be so. I have heard of one good woman, a child of God, who was asked whether she did not wish to depart, for she was such a sufferer. Said she, "The Lord's will be done! I have no wish about it." "Well," said one, "but if the Lord would say to you that you might choose, what would you choose?" "Oh," she answered, "I have been so little accustomed to think about choosing that I should turn round and say to Him, 'Choose You, Lord Jesus, for me.'" Why, dear Friends, if we had to choose our own lot and got into trouble, we would have the responsibility of it. Is it not far better for us to say to the Lord, "You shall choose our inheritance for us"?—

"I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might!
But You choose for me, O my God,
So shall I walk aright."

If we take our own way and get into difficulties, then we may say, "How foolish we were to make this choice!" But if, instead, we yield ourselves up to the supreme Director, to be led wherever He pleases, and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd, it is amazing what a sweet contentment our spirit will feel! The Lord bring us all to enjoy that rest and peace!

IV. Lastly, THIS WILL BE A LESSON IN OBEDIENCE.

Whatever service the King requires of you will please you. He may put you in a pulpit, or He may put you in a kitchen. He may put you in a place of honor, or He may put you in a place of dishonor. It is yours not to reason why, it is yours to do the work appointed! It has been well said that if there were two angels in Heaven and the great King had said to them, "I have two errands to be done upon the earth—one of you must go and announce the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary. The other must go and stand and sweep a street-crossing." The angels would not have a preference between the two services, it would be enough for them to do their Lord's will! May we come to that point, that we may not be picking and choosing, but may be pleased with whatever the King gives us to do, and whatever our hand finds to do, may we do it with all our might!

But suppose that, all of a sudden, there should be no service to be rendered, and that *you should have to suffer, instead?* That there should be no battle for you, Soldier, no shout of war, no noise of music and no rushing against the foe, but instead of that, you should be sent into the trenches and have to lie there in the cold and wet, or be ordered into a hospital and have to lie there, to go upstairs, and never to come down again? If we have come to this point—that whatever the King does pleases all the people—how readily shall we lie still and suffer instead of

going forth to serve! If God is glorified, does it really matter where *we* are? What becomes of us is of small consequence compared with bringing Glory to His great name!

Oftentimes we are permitted *to work hard and yet to meet with great discouragement*. The congregation gets smaller or grows careless. The district seems as if it refused to be blessed. We meet with many impediments in our service. Well, if they are not impediments of our own making, if they come in the order of Providence, let it be so and let us still say that whatever the King does pleases all the people! It was a pretty remark I read, the other day, of a Christian man who said, "I used to have many disappointments until I changed one letter of the word, and chopped it into two, so that instead of, 'disappointments,' I read it, 'His appointments.'" That was a wonderful change, for "disappointments" break your heart, but, "His appointments" you accept right cheerily! What if I am to have no success? I will pray for it and labor for it, and be ready to die for it—but if I do not get it, I will still go on. What said the poor Negro about obeying God's command? "Massa, if the good Lord bids me jump through a brick wall, it is for me to jump at the wall and it rests with the Lord whether I jump through it or not." He can make the walls vanish if it pleases Him! And if He desires it, I could believe, even, in the impossible! Love laughs at impossibilities and faith cries, "It shall be done." Therefore, let us pray the Lord to bring us into this happy state, that whatever He does may always please us.

Perhaps some may find Christ, tonight, if they will get into the spirit of the text. If they will be pleased with God's way of salvation and come and receive Jesus, now, just as He is, and just as they are, they will go out of this house saved! This is, after all, only faith in one of its forms, this being content with Christ, this yielding up of the will to Him. The Lord bless everyone of you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 147.

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God.* You that know Him, you that love Him, "praise you the Lord." "It is good." "It is right, it is acceptable. It is good for you—the Lord counts it good. "It is good to sing praises unto our God." And to God alone. There is no better argument for anything than that it is good, for good men delight in that which is good because it is good. For it is pleasant. That is a very happy conjunction, for it is not everything that is good that is pleasant, medicine to wit. It is not everything that is pleasant that is good, for there are some things that are pleasant in the mouth, but they are poison in the stomach. But to sing praises unto our God is both good and pleasant!

1. *And praise is comely.* Or, beautiful, delightful. It is the right thing. Men never look so like angels as when they are praising God, and angels are never more heavenly than when they are engaged in the worship of

Heaven. And that worship is praise. Here are the Psalmist's reasons for praising God—

2. *The LORD does build up Jerusalem.* Praise Him for that. He is the great Builder, the Builder of the Church. He laid the foundations in the Everlasting Covenant. He carries on the building with infinite skill by His Divine Spirit—"The Lord does build up Jerusalem."

2. *He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* These are the stones with which He builds, men who were like outcasts. What wonderful living stones these outcasts make! They love the Lord best who once were most His enemies. None sing of "Free Grace and dying love" with sweeter accents than the men who have had much forgiven. "The Lord does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." Mark the context between the two—it is when great sinners are saved that the Church is built up! There was more done when Paul was converted, I know, than at almost any other time, for he became the great Apostle to the Gentiles through whom myriads were saved.

3. *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* To be a builder and a physician, too, are strange offices to be combined in one, yet so it is with God. Is there a broken heart, here? The Lord is ready to heal you! See how He does it. "He binds up their wounds"—puts on the strapping, wraps round the linen cloth, and secures the flesh until it heals. A wonderful Surgeon is the Lord God Almighty, there is none like He! "He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds." What a singular thing it is that the next verse should be what it is!

4. *He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.* In His condescension, stooping over a broken heart. In His Omniscience, counting the number of the stars! The word signifies as when a merchant counts his money into a bag. So does God, as it were, count the stars, like so many golden coins. "He calls them all by their names," as when the muster-roll is read and the soldier answers, "Here!" so does the Lord speak to the stars and they answer to their names!

5, 6. *Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the meek.* They are down very low in their own estimation, but the Lord lifts them up.

6. *He casts the wicked down to the ground.* The Lord is the great changer of men's positions—those that are up He throws down—and those that are down He lifts up. Thus the blessed virgin sang, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."

7, 8. *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.* This is the true science, this is the real philosophy—not merely the laws of nature, but God everywhere—God cloud-making, God rain-preparing, God clothing even the hilltops and out of the way places with grass which no man has planted and which no man will ever mow! Perhaps there is somebody here who, when at home, is like grass on the mountains, away from all means of Grace, with nobody to help you, nobody to guide you. Listen to

this Psalm and praise the name of the Lord, "who makes grass to grow upon the mountains."

9. *He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.* The very best illustration of that verse is to be found, I think, in crows going to bed at night. You may have heard their caws. White says, in his *Natural History of Selborne*, that a little child said in his hearing, "Hark, Father, the rooks are saying their prayers." It does seem something like it and I believe David had heard it, and that is why he put it here. "The young ravens which cry," for those strange birds—rooks, crows, ravens and the like—even with their wild cries speak to God! Who can listen to the birds in the early morning without feeling ashamed of himself for not singing more to the praise of God? Some of the feathered songsters lift up their voices even in the night—the nightingale charms the hours of darkness—and should not we sing unto God when all nature rings with His praise? "He gives to the beast his food." Any of you who are in great distress may pray to God, "Lord, feed me, for You give, even, food to the beast." Do any of you need spiritual food? Cry to Him to feed you, for He gives even to the beast his food! Are you not much better than many animals? I remember "Father Taylor" once saying to himself, and then writing it, "I am in distress just now, and full of doubts: but what am I? When the great whale goes through the deep, the Almighty Father gives him a ton of herrings for his breakfast and never misses them—surely He can feed *me*." Assuredly He can! He can give to all of us all that we need.

10. *He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.* As the kings did in those days, their infantry and their cavalry were their glory. The Lord does not care for that sort of thing. What gives Him pleasure, then? Listen—

11. *The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.* As kings have gloried in their troops, so does God glory in tender hearts that fear Him and that hope in His mercy! I love that double description— "them that fear Him" and, "those that hope in His mercy." There is a mixture there—fearing and hoping—but the mixture makes a sweet amalgam of Grace! It is like a fisherman's net—there is the lead to sink it and here are the corks to float it! If you only hope in His mercy, you will not come back empty from the great banquet of everlasting love—"Jehovah takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."

12, 13. *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.* Happy Zion, which God secures so well that even bars and posts are finished—not merely walls and gates—but the bars of the gates! There is nothing lacking in the Covenant of Grace. If the gates need bars, God thinks of the little as well as of the great—"He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you."

14. *He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat.* An old commentator says, "Generally, if you get quantity, you do not get quality, but when you deal with God, 'He fills you,' there is quan-

tity, 'with the finest of the wheat,' there is quality." You get *both* in God—an abundance of the best.

15. *He sends forth His command to earth: His word runs very swiftly.* Great kings have tried to make their postal arrangements act with rapidity. In the olden time they employed swift dromedaries for this purpose, but, "His word runs very swiftly." When God has a message to send, He can flash it by lightning, or dispatch it in an instant by one of His angels—"His word runs very swiftly." I wish it would run to some of you who are rushing fast into sin, and that it would overtake you, and arrest you, and bring you to repentance and to faith in God! Here is a verse that may help to cool you on this summer's evening

16. *He gives snow like wool.* It is as soft as wool and, like wool, it is a covering, and keeps the earth warm in the bitter frosts and saves the plants from death. "He gives snow like wool."

16, 17. *He scatters the hoar frost like ashes. He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?* I want you to notice how, in the olden days, good men felt God to be very near. They thought that all this was caused by God—"He gives snow; He scatters hoar frost"—and they speak of, "His ice, His cold." It is a poor progress that philosophers have made, to try to get us farther off from God than we used to be, but I bless His name that He is as near as He ever was to those who believe in Him! They can see His working and feel the touch of His hand! But what a wonder-working God this is who uses snow to warm the earth and makes the frost to act like ashes—yes, who makes bread out of ice, for when there is no frosty weather, the harvests are not half as good—the very frosts break up the clods and help to create bread for men! The Lord works by contraries. Perhaps, at the time that He means to save you, you will think that He is destroying you. If He means to heal you, He will wound you! If He means to lift you up, He will throw you down! Learn to understand His method, then, for this is the mode of His working.

18, 19. *He sends out His word, and melts them: He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. He shows His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.* That is the best news of all, that God reveals Himself to His children! All He works in nature is eclipsed by what He does in Grace!

20. *He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the LORD.*

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.

HALLELUJAH! HALLELUJAH!
NO. 2421

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 14, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1887.

"For the LORD takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands."
Psalm 149:4-6.

I THINK I have read that, once, when the seraphic Samuel Rutherford was preaching, he came, before long, to speak on the high praises of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was a theme upon which he was at home, and when he reached that point, and had spoken a little upon it, the Duke of Argyle, who was in the congregation, cried out, "Now you are on the right strain, man; hold on to that!" I thought that, this morning, we, also, struck the right key. [See sermon #1968, Volume 38—*Jubilee Joy—Or, Believers Joyful in Their King*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] We were trying to extol our God, our King, and to magnify His holy name and something seemed to say to me, "Hold on to that strain! Let us have the same note, again, tonight, and let us continue to laud and praise and magnify the name of the Most High."

So, without further preface, I remark, first, that our text contains *some reasons for praise*. We had a great many this morning, but here are some more—"For the Lord takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation." Then our text gives *special phases of praise*. It shows us how, in a peculiar manner, we may praise the Lord—"Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands." There is plenty of sea room for a preacher here, but as we have not much time, we will make for the nearest port and our words shall be as few as possible.

I. First, here are SOME REASONS FOR PRAISE.

The first of these reasons is *the delight of God in His people*—"The Lord takes pleasure in His people." Therefore let us praise Him! It is delightful that God takes pleasure in us who are His people. We feel that this is a great stoop of condescending Grace. What is there in us in which the Lord can take pleasure? Nothing, unless He has put it there! If He sees any beauty in us, it must be the reflection of His own face. Yet, the text says so and, therefore, it must be true—"The Lord takes pleasure in His people." In the 147th Psalm we read, "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him." You who tremble at His Word, you who stand in awe of

Him, you who trust Him and seek to obey Him—you are those that fear Him and He takes pleasure in you! He that is infinitely blessed—can He take pleasure in us? He that has the harps of angels to make music for Him, He that has the host of cherubim and seraphim to be His attendants, He that can make a world with a wish—does He deign to take pleasure in *us*?

I am sure this is true, not only because it is stated, here, that the Lord takes pleasure in His people, but because we see this Truth of God in action! The Lord takes pleasure in His people's prayers. What poor imperfect things they are! Yet He opens His ear to hear them. He would sooner miss the song of a cherub than miss the prayer of a broken heart. He is charmed with the prayers of His people—they hold Him, they prevail with Him—He will do anything for those who know how to pray. "Prayer moves the arm that moves the world." He must take great delight in His people, or else He would not listen to their prayers! And He is pleased with their praises, too. There is never a hymn that is sung by a true heart but God accepts it. No one may hear it on earth—it may not be worth the hearing, for the sound may be discordant. But when a true heart seeks to praise God, He cares not for the vocal sounds—He has regard to the voice of the spirit's thanksgiving. Must He not take great pleasure in us to notice our praises and our prayers? Yet He does so.

This will be still clearer to us, dear Friends, if we remember that while He delights to hear us praise and pray, He also speaks to us. The Lord has a wonderful way of revealing Himself to His people. You who are spiritually blind can go through this world and never see Him, but there are others who have had their eyes opened and they have seen the King in His beauty! You who are spiritually deaf can go through the world and never hear His voice, but they whose ears have been unstopped have heard Him say to them, "Seek you My face," and many a blessed word of promise has He spoken home to their hearts, making them glad. Jehovah does not shut Himself up within His palaces. The Lord Jesus comes forth out of the ivory palaces wherein they make Him glad, for His delights are with the sons of men—and He loves to commune with His own people as He does not with the world! Does not this show what pleasure He must take in us—first to hear us speak, and then to speak to us, Himself?

Beloved, you who know the Lord must feel that He never would have dealt with you as He has done if He had not taken great pleasure in you. Why, you are His children! I saw just now, from the window, a man playing with a child, and he seemed so happy as he tossed the little one about. It was but a baby, but I suppose the charm to him was that it was his own, and it seemed to give the father great delight. When I see a father playing and toying, thus, with his child, and finding joy in his offspring, I understand, a little, how it is that the Lord takes pleasure in His people. Are we not born of Him? Has He not carried and nursed us many a day? And does He not daily feed and supply us with all necessary things? Therefore, we marvel not that He takes pleasure in us.

But why is this? Surely it is His own Grace that makes Him take pleasure in us. If you want a person to love you, be kind to him. Yet you

may fail even then. To be certain of his love, *let him be kind to you.* A child may forget the mother—it receives much from her—but gratitude does not always come to her in return. But the mother never forgets the child to whom she has given so much! What she has given is a firmer bond between her and the child than ever gratitude is from the child to the mother. Now, God has done so much for us, already, that this is why He continues to love us. Jesus remembers that He died for us, the Holy Spirit remembers that He strove with us, the great Father remembers how He has preserved us—and because of all this goodness in the past He takes pleasure in us—

"With joy the Father does approve
The fruit of His eternal love;
The Son with joy looks down, and sees
The purchase of His agonies."

Moreover, I think that the Lord takes pleasure in us not only because of all that He has done, but because He sees something in us that pleases Him, something which is His own work. A sculptor, when he commences on the marble, has only a rough block, but, after days and weeks of hard working, he begins to see something like the image he is aiming at producing. So I believe that God is pleased when He sees in any of us some Grace—some repentance, some faith, some beginnings of that sanctification—which will, one day, be perfect. You know how pleased you are with your children when they begin to talk, yet it is poor talk, is it not? It is baby talk, but you like to hear the sound of it! The first little sentiment that drops from the child's lips is nothing very remarkable, yet you tell others and brothers and sisters quote it as an instance of opening intelligence! So does God take pleasure in the tears of penitence, in the broken confession, in the first evidences of faith, in the trembling of hope because He has worked all this and He is pleased with what He has done, pleased to see that, so far, His handiwork has been successful!

Besides, I believe that every true sculptor can see in the block of marble, the statue that he means to make. I doubt not that the artist could see the Laocoon of the Vatican after he had chipped for a little time, the figure of the serpent, and the father, and the sons all standing out in that wondrous group long before anybody else could see it. And the Lord takes pleasure in His people because He can see us as we shall be. "It does not yet appear what we shall be," but it does appear to Him! In the cast of His mind and the shaping of His eternal purpose He knows, dear Sister, though you are now struggling with your fears, what you will be when you shall stand before the blazing lamps of the eternal Throne of God! He knows, young man, though you have but a few days turned from sin and begun to struggle with vice, what you will be, when, with all the blood-washed host, you shall cast your crown before His Throne! Yes, the Lord takes delight in His people as knowing what they are yet to be.

As I talk to you about God's delight in His people, I feel as if I must take delight in Him. I think that if the Queen were to send for you all to come and see her, and if you went in and out of the palace, and she was very pleased with you all, and showed great affection for you, you would

be sure to have the same esteem for her. It would so completely win your hearts that you would not be able to help it—and you would not wish to do so. Now, the great King has made us His creatures, His favorites, yes, His sons and daughters! And He has said that we shall shortly be with Him enthroned above the skies and, therefore, we must praise Him. God forbid that we should be silent when we receive such love from Him! Praise Him! Praise Him, "for the Lord takes pleasure in His people."

The next reason for praising God is found in *the beauty He puts upon His people*. The second part of this verse says, "He will beautify the meek with salvation." Great kings and princes have often tried to magnify themselves by beautifying their courtiers. They that stand nearest to thrones are expected to be bedizened after an extraordinary rate. Well now, our King takes the meek and lowly and He beautifies them with salvation! They have no beauty of their own—they do not think themselves beautiful, they often mourn their own deformities and imperfections—but the Lord is to be praised because—"He will beautify the meek with salvation."

I find that, according to different interpreters, this text may be read in three different ways. First, as in our version, "He will beautify the meek with salvation." Next, "He will beautify the afflicted with deliverance." Hear that, you afflicted ones! Jot it down for your comfort. And, next, "He will beautify the meek with victory." The men that cannot fight shall be beautified with victory! The men that *will not* fight, the men that resist not evil, the men that yield and suffer in patience—the Lord will beautify them with victory! When the fighting men and those that stood up for their own rights will find themselves covered with shame, "He will beautify the meek with victory."

How does God beautify those who are meek? In the Scriptures you will find that the most beautiful persons were the meek persons. I remember only three people whose faces are said to have shone—you remember those three, do you not? There was, first, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose face shone when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration so that the people came running together to Him. How meek and lowly of heart was He! Another person whose face shone was Moses, when he came down from the mount of communion with God. Of him we read, "Now the man Moses was very meek." The third man whose face shone was Stephen, when he stood before the council and, in the meekest manner pleaded for his Lord and Master. If your face is to shine, dear Friend, you must get rid of a high and haughty spirit—you must be *meek*—for the brightness of the Divine Light will never rest on the forehead that flashes with anger. Be gentle, quiet, yielding, like your Lord, and He will then beautify you.

Meekness is, itself, a beauty. We read of "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." There is many a Christian woman who has been all but divinely beautiful in her gentleness, bearing all sorts of provocation's, going about her domestic duties with great quietude. I am sure that I have known one or two good old Quaker ladies who looked to me as nearly like angels as ever mortals could be. There was about them a quietude of

manner, a gentleness, a sort of unworldliness or unearthliness of beauty, though they wore no jewels and were decorated with no adornments that might have commended them to the taste of fashionable folk. The Lord gives great beauty to His people who are very quiet and submissive. If you can bear and forbear—if you will not be provoked to speak a hasty word—that meekness of yours is, itself, a beauty!

Beside that, God beautifies meek people with peace. They have not to go and beg pardon and make up quarrels, as others have, for they have had no quarrel. They have not to think at night, "I really said what I ought not to have said," for they have not done so. There is a great beauty about the peace that comes of meekness!

Another beauty which God puts on the meek is contentment. They that are of a quiet and gentle spirit through the Grace of God are satisfied with their lot. They thank God for little—they are of the mind of the godly woman who ate the crust of bread and drank a little water, and said—"What? All this, and Jesus Christ, too?" There is a great charm about contentment, while envy and greed are ugly things in the eyes of those who have anything like spiritual perception. So meekness, through bringing contentment, beautifies us.

Out of meekness also comes holiness—and who has not heard of "the beauty of holiness"? When one is made to subdue his temper and curb his will, and yield his mind sweetly up to Christ, then obedience to God's will follows and the whole life becomes lovely! Let us praise the Lord that ever He put any beauty upon any of us. And let us bless God for the holiness of His people whenever we see it. It is a pity that there should be so little of it, but what a comfort it is that the Lord has some among His people who are of a meek and gentle spirit, whom He beautifies with salvation!

Here I cannot help breaking away from my subject to tell you what happened to me this morning after the service was over. When I went into the vestry, there was a number of American friends and others waiting to shake hands with me. I was glad to shake hands with them. But there was one person present who did me more good than all the other Brothers and Sisters put together. He was a father and he said to me, "If my emotions will permit me, I would like to tell you something that is on my heart. I feel that I must tell it to you." This friend came from a distant city. He continued, "My son left my house well clothed and well stored with money, but for a long, long while I never heard from him. He plunged into all kinds of sin till he reduced himself, by disease, to beggary and want. He had not even shoes for his feet."

As he passed by the front of the Tabernacle—(you young people, here, listen to this story and take home the lesson of it)—all in rags, on a Sunday afternoon, a young man asked him to come into one of the classes here and gave him a tract. He uttered an oath, threw the tract on the pavement, and trampled on it. After a few seconds, some sort of compunction seized him and he turned back and picked up the tract, whereupon this young Brother, quick and alert—(as I hope you young men and women always will be in looking after poor sinners)—spoke to him and

said, "Oh, you have picked it up. Now will you read it?" "Yes," he answered, "I will read it."

The young man then said, "Come into our class," but the poor fellow replied, "Look at me." "Yes," he said, "but we will not look at you if you will come in. They will all be glad to see you. Perhaps it may be a turn in your life." The young man did go into the class and he came in the evening to hear the sermon. They put him somewhere where people would not stare at him, and God blessed Him! He sought out some friends in London who, at first, could not believe that he was the son of this person. They had seen him, before, in better days, so they questioned him and they found that he knew so much about the father that they said, "Yes, no doubt you are his son." His feet were bleeding and he, himself, was sick, so they cared for him, clothed him and he came in and out of this House of Prayer, his father told me, for many months serving God. His father saw him and rejoiced over him!

Now this story was told, with many tears, in the vestry behind me—told as I cannot tell it—and the good man invoked every blessing on me and upon that young Brother, whoever he may be, that brought his son in. "And then, Sir," said the father, "He could not find any work to do so he enlisted in the army, and was killed at Tel-el-Kebir." He left in his knapsack a letter to his father to say that he died in perfect peace, and that he had found the Savior at the Tabernacle. Our friend was so glad and I could not help telling this story because that Brother outside, I hope, was one of the meek ones, and God has beautified him by bringing that soul to Christ! And we who try to preach very plainly and never aim at adorning our discourses with the flowers of eloquence, but try to talk to people from our hearts—may God give us great beauty in the eyes of many when we bring their children or themselves to the Savior's feet! I only wish that somebody, like that young man, might be converted, by the Grace of God, through this sermon.

I think that I have said enough upon those reasons for praise. Let us praise God with all our hearts and bless and magnify His name because He takes pleasure in His people, and because He beautifies the meek with salvation and, sometimes, does it by making them the means of salvation to others!

II. The second portion of my sermon, which is to be concerning SPECIAL PHASES OF PRAISE, shall be delivered with great brevity.

The first way of praising the Lord is by *glorying in God*—"Let the saints be joyful in glory." "That means the saints in Heaven, does it not?" asks somebody. No, no, no! The Psalmist is not writing for *them*, he is writing for us! "Well, but we are not in Glory," says one. I do not know. I think that we are. First, we are in Glory by contrast. Look, dear Friends, a little while ago we were in sin and we were condemned under sin, but now we are delivered, we are absolved from guilt! Surely that is like being in Glory! A little while ago we were cast down and troubled—and had not a ray of hope. Now we have rest in Christ and perfect peace. Is not that like being in Glory? Why, years back, when I had been preaching in Wales, I heard a Welshman cry out, "Gogoniant!" and others have shouted,

"Glory," and I thought it was all right. There is enough to make the saints cry, "Glory!" to think that they have been redeemed from death and Hell, and that their feet have been taken out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, set upon a rock and their goings established! Why, truly, it is like being in Heaven, or Glory! Therefore, "let the saints be joyful in glory."

Next, as we are in Glory by contrast, so we are in Glory by *anticipation*. What will Glory be? It will be a peace with God, but we already have that. Glory will be rest and we also have that. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Glory will be communion with God and we have that, too. "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Glory will be victory and we have that. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith." "But," asks one, "you do not mean to say that we have Heaven already?" Yes, I do. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." Are not those the Words of Scripture? Here is another Word of Scripture—"God has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." By anticipation and by foretaste we have already obtained life eternal—therefore, "let the saints be joyful in glory." Rightly do we sing—

"The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below.
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.
The hill of Sion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets!
Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry—
We're marching thro'
Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high!"

"I cannot get up to that," says one. Try, dear Brother, try! At any rate, get as far as this—wherever there is Grace there will be Glory. Grace is the egg and glory is the hatching of it. Grace is the seed and glory is the plant that comes out of it. Having the egg and the seed, we have practically and virtually the Glory! Therefore, I say, again, with the Psalmist, "Let the saints be joyful in glory."

The next special kind of praise is joy in special circumstances—"Let them sing aloud upon their beds." This is a message for the time of sickness. Praise the Lord when you are ill! Sing to His Glory when you cannot sleep! Sing when the head aches, for that is the highest kind of praise that comes out of the body that is racked with pain! "Let them sing aloud upon their beds." There are, sometimes, infirmities of the body that seem to quicken the soul. There are aches and pains that make us more fresh and vigorous of heart. But there are others that paralyze the mind and, reaching the very core of one's being, seem to freeze up every spring of activity. It is little wonder that under such infirmities the brave heart grows faint! And it is especially so when there is mental affliction added to the physical pain. I have known men of God, highly favored, and Sisters in like condition, who have walked in the Light as God is in

the light, and have had great blessing from Him and, by-and-by, they have had strong inward temptation, an awful fight within, till sometimes they have had to cry out in their very souls to know whether they were with God, or God was with them at all! Doubts have insinuated themselves into the mind and there have been grave and solemn questions about matters most vital and important. And, at such times the man of God, though he still believes in his God and is obedient to the Divine will, yet feels a chill creeping over his very soul and he is ready to faint! Then is the time for him to sing aloud upon his bed, for praise to God under such circumstances will be especially acceptable!

Your bed? Why, that is the place of seclusion! There you are alone. Have you ever felt so happy that you did not want to sleep? I have sometimes had such joy in the night that I have tried to keep myself from falling asleep lest I should miss the hallowed fellowship which my heart has had with God! Commune with God upon your beds and sing His praises, if not aloud with the voice, yet aloud with the heart!

Upon your bed? Why, that is the place of domestic gathering, for the bed here meant is a couch on which the Orientals reclined when they *ate*. Sing the Lord's praises on your couches—that is, when you gather with your families. "Praise you the Lord: sing aloud upon your couches." I wish we had more family singing—we ought to have more. Matthew Henry says, with regard to family prayer, "They that pray every night and morning do well. They that pray and read the Scriptures do better. They that pray and read the scriptures and sing, do best of all." And so say I—that is the best of all family worship! Let us take care, in our domestic relationships, that we praise this blessed God who is the God of our households as well as the God of our sanctuaries!

Upon their beds? Why, that means the bed of death! We shall soon go upstairs and gather up our feet in the bed. Oh, then, you dear children of God, praise Him aloud upon your beds! I believe that the sweetest praises ever heard on earth have cone from lips that were just closing in the silence of the tomb—

"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breathe.
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Always praise Him! Always praise Him! When nobody hears you, in the silence of your bedchamber, still sing aloud unto your God!

We must press on, though we have not time for much that ought to be said. The next special phase of praise is elevation in song. The sixth verse says, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth." As I told you when I read the Psalm, [Exposition at the end of the sermon—ED.] it is "in their throat" in the Hebrew, for God's people sing from their hearts and so they are a deep-throated people who do not merely sibilate praise with the lips, but send it up from the depths of their soul!

What does the Psalmist say? "Let the high praises of God be in their throats." Our praises ought to be very high praises, for there is a high objective before us. We praise a great God! We should, therefore, praise Him with high feelings, feelings wound up to the highest point of high de-

light and high desire! Our praises should climb up to Heaven's gate—running up Jacob's ladder even as the angels did—till we cast our praises right at the foot of the eternal Throne of God. Let us sound forth the high praises of God with our mouths! Let us extol Him, magnify Him and make Him great! Say noble things of God wherever you go, for He well deserves it at your hands.

The last phase of praise concerns *courage in conflict*—"and a two-edged sword in their hands." Songs in their mouths and swords in their hands! It is something like the sword and the trowel—the trowel to build with and the sword to smite with. God's people must sing and fight at the same time—and they fight best who sing best. Not those that *growl* best, but those that *sing* best, fight best

But with whom are we to fight? That depends upon what your sword is. If you had a sword of steel, you would fight with men—but that is no part of your business. You are not called to that cruel work, but, as you have the sword of the Spirit, which is two-edged, which is, indeed, *all* edge, for it cuts whichever way you turn it, go forth and praise God by the use of that two-edged sword which is the Word of God!

Let me stir up God's people here to do this. Go and proclaim the Gospel! Proclaim the Gospel. I think I have, to a large extent, attained my wish in this congregation. I miss such a large number of our friends on Sunday nights and I am delighted to miss them, for they have no business to be here, then! They are out preaching, teaching, working in Ragged-Schools, mission halls and all sorts of holy service. That is what you ought to do if you love the Lord—get a good meal, once, on the Sabbath, and then go and do a good day's work the rest of the Sunday! Praise God with your mouths and have the two-edged sword in your hands! To war against ignorance, to war against vice, to war against drunkenness, to war against infidelity and sin of every kind is one of the best ways of praising the Most High! Until the last sinner is saved, see to it that you keep the two-edged sword of God's Word in your hands and then forever let the high praises of God be in your mouth!

I have been talking all this while about praising God and there are some here who never praised Him in all their lives! What wretched creatures you are! God has been blessing you all this while and you have never praised Him. I have seen hogs under an oak munching acorns—how they enjoy themselves! They never stop to thank the oak—such a thought never enters into their swinish heads. Do not blame the swine, but think of the numbers of men who are worse than they are! God is to them far more than the oak is to the animals. All things come of Him—their health, their strength, their daily comforts—and yet they never thank Him! Have you some little chickens at home? Let them chide you! Whenever the chick stoops down to the saucer to drink a little water, up goes its head as if to thank God for every drop! Oh, begin to praise God! Begin to thank God at once!

Perhaps this may be the beginning of something better, for when you have begun to praise Him, you may begin to dispraise yourself—and that is next door to feeling your sinfulness, which will lead you to seek the

Savior! And if you seek Him, He will be found of you. Seek Him now, this summer's night, while all God's bounty is being poured upon the earth to make it fertile! Oh, that He might pour some heavenly beams on you to make you fruitful to His praise! May He do it and to His name shall be glory, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 149; 150.

The whole Book of Psalms is full of praise, but the praise culminates at the close. There are five "Hallelujah Psalms" at the end of the Book. They are so named because they both begin and conclude with the word, *Hallelujah*, "Praise you the Lord." It must be to the intense regret of all reverent persons to find the word, Hallelujah, so used today in such a way that it is made to be a commonplace instead of a very sacred word—Hallelujah, or, Praise be unto Jah, Jehovah! He who uses this word in a flippant manner is guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain!

Psalm 149:1. *Praise you the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song.* You have had new mercies from the Lord—give Him, in return, a new song! You have a new apprehension of His mercy. You who live under this Gospel dispensation have something more to sing of than even David experienced! Therefore, "sing unto Jehovah a new song"—throw your hearts into it! Do not let it be a matter of routine, but let your whole soul, in all its vigor and freshness, address itself to the praise of God!

1. *And His praise in the congregation of saints.* All saints praise God—they are not saints if they do not. The praise of any one saint is sweet to Him, but in the congregation of saints there is a linked sweetness, a wonderful commixture of precious things. Sing His praise, then, in the congregation of His holy ones.

2. *Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him.* Adore your Creator for your being and for your well-being. He has twice made you, you people of God! Give Him, therefore, double praise—not only the song of those who sang when creation's work was done, but the praise of those who sing because they are made new creatures in Christ Jesus!

2, 3. *Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name in the dance.* The holy dance of those days differed altogether from the frivolous and lascivious dances of the present time. It was a sacred exercise in which the whole body expressed its delight before God.

3. *Let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp.* The one to be struck and the other to be gently touched to yield its stringed sweetness.

4. *For the LORD takes pleasure in His people.* Should not *they* take pleasure in the condescension on His part to take any pleasure in them? Oh, what a lift up it is for us when we learn to take pleasure in the Lord!

4. *He will beautify the meek with salvation.* He dresses all His children, but the meek are His Josephs, and upon them He puts the coat of many colors. And they shall inherit the earth.

5. *Let the saints be joyful in glory.* God is their glory! Let them be joyful in Him.

5. *Let them sing aloud upon their beds.* If they cannot come up to the congregation, yet, when they rest at home, or when they *suffer* at home, let them not cease from their music. God's praise comes up sweetly, I do not doubt, this Sabbath evening, from many a lonely chamber where the saints are waiting for the appearing of their Lord.

6. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouths.* "In their throats," says the Hebrew, for God's saints sing deep down in their throats. There is a deeply rooted music when we praise God, which is altogether unlike the mere syllables of the lips that come from a hypocrite's tongue.

6. *And a two-edged sword in their hands.* For we have to fight, today, with principalities, and powers, and wickednesses everywhere! With the sword of the Spirit in our hands, we fight the battles of the Prince of Peace!

7, 8. *To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.* So was it when Israel came into Canaan, ordained to execute the vengeance of God upon the heathen nations. We have no such warrant and no such painful duty—but there is a prince who shall be bound with chains and with fetters of iron one day. The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly and, meanwhile, we fight against the powers of evil of every kind. Oh, that God would help us to bind King Drunkenness with chains and King Infidelity with fetters of iron! Would God the day were come when impurity, which defiles so many, were overcome and vanquished by the two-edged sword of the Spirit of God!

9. *To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints.* Or it may be read, "He is the honor of all His saints." "Unto you that believe He is precious," or, "He is an honor," says the Apostle, and there is no honor like that which comes of being coupled with God, living in Him, and living for Him!

9. *Praise you the LORD.* What bursts of praise must have risen from the hosts of Israel when they gathered for their annual festivals and sang together these last great Hallelujah Psalms!

Psalm 150:1. *Praise you the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary.* Notice how, in this last Psalm, it is praise, praise, praise, all the way through! I think we have the word, "praise," some 13 times in the six verses. It is all. "praise Him, praise Him, praise Him." It is not enough to do it once, or twice, we should keep on praising the Lord till we should make the very heavens ring with the music of His praises! "Praise you the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary." That is, in His Holy Place where He dwells. Begin, you angels, cherubim and seraphim—pour forth His praise!

1. *Praise Him in the firmament of His power.* Let every star shine forth His praises, and sun and moon cease not to extol Him—"Praise Him in the firmament of His power."

2. *Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness.* There is a task for us—we shall never attain to that height. We sometimes sing—

"Wide as His vast dominion lies,
Make the Creator's name be known!
Loud as His thunder shout His praise,
And sound it lofty as His Throne."

But who can compass such a feat as that?

3, 4. *Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.* So that there were all kinds of music in those days praising God—the wind and the stringed instruments, the timbrel and the pipe. Everything that can praise God should praise Him. The spiritual significance of these verses is this—let men of different orders and different sorts praise the Lord—men, women, children, those who are deeply taught and those who know but little, those who are great and those who are small. Let every heart regard itself as an instrument of praise and use itself wholly for the Lord's praise. Having gotten so far, the Psalmist remembered that there were discs of brass, which were struck together, and gave forth a sound to be heard at a great distance, so He said—

5. *Praise Him upon the loud cymbals.* Crash!

5. *Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.* Then came another crash!

6. *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise you the LORD.* A Jewish Rabbi once remarked to me that the name, Jehovah, was not made up of letters, but only of a series of breaths. [The preacher here uttered the three syllables of the sacred name, Je-ho-vah, as though they were not composed of letters, but only a succession of breaths.] That is the nearest approach to the name of God, three breaths—therefore since all breath comes from Him—and His very name can only be pronounced by breath, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise you the Lord." Hallelujah!

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.

"THERE IS FORGIVENESS"
NO. 2422

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 21, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1887.

"But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."
Psalm 130:4.

HAVE you noticed the verse which comes before the text? It runs thus, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" That is a confession. Now, confession must always come before absolution. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." If we try to cloak our sin, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and no pardon can come from God to us. Therefore, plead guilty, plead guilty! You ought to do it, for you *are* guilty. You will find it wisest to do it, for this is the only way to obtain mercy. Cast yourself upon the mercy of your Judge and you shall find mercy—but first acknowledge that you *need* mercy. Be honest with your conscience and honest with your God—confess the iniquity which you have done and mourn over the righteousness to which you have not attained.

You notice that this confession is recorded with a kind of grave astonishment—"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" This is as much as for the Psalmist to say, "I am sure that *I* cannot, and who can?" And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if God shall deal with us according to our iniquities, where shall *we* stand, and who among us shall stand anywhere? I dare not stand to preach if God shall judge me according to my iniquities! You dare not stand to sing—what have you to do with singing if God is marking your iniquities? I wonder that men can stand at their counters and stand at their work while their sin is unforgiven! And then how shall we stand in the Day of Judgment? The best saint on earth, if he stands in his own righteousness, alone, and is judged according to his own offenses, why, the Justice of God will blow him away like the chaff, or consume him as with a flame of fire! "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

It is a dreadful fact that this, "if," is no, "if," to those who are not believers in Christ, but it is a matter of terrible certainty! God marks the iniquities of you who are unbelievers. Although as yet He does not visit them upon you, else you could not stand, yet He sees them and He records them! As gold and silver are put into a bag and sealed up, so are your iniquities. All the transgressions of your past life are in the Book of Record, from which they can never be blotted out except by one gracious hand! Would to God that you would accept pardon from that pierced

hand! But, apart from that, your iniquities are engraved as in eternal brass! And in that day when the forgotten things shall be brought to light, all the sins that now lie at the bottom of the sea of time shall be cast up upon the shore and all shall be seen. And every secret thing shall be set in the light of day, and every transgression and iniquity shall be revealed by the light of the Great White Throne—and the ungodly shall be punished for all their ungodly words and ungodly deeds and ungodly thoughts according to the rules of equity in that last day of assize!

O Sirs, God *will* mark iniquity and then, whoever is out of Christ shall be able to stand! Whoever has never hidden in the riven Rock of Ages shall find no shelter! No, shall they not all cry to the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the dreadful face of Him who shall sit upon the Throne of God? Even at this time there are some in this House of Prayer whose sins are lying upon them and whose transgressions are written in God's Book of Remembrance! How can they dare to stand, even, before a Throne of Grace, and how will they stand before the Throne of Judgment?

That third verse makes an appropriate preface to my text—it is the black thundercloud upon which I see written, as with the finger of God and with a lightning flash, the wonderful words we are now to consider, "But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

I. My first head is taken from the first word of the text—"But." Here is A WHISPER OF HOPE. "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? *But*"—Oh, the sweet music of that little word! It seems to come in when the terrible drum of alarm is being beaten and the dreadful clarion of judgment is sounding forth! There is a pause with this word, "*But there is forgiveness.*" It is a soft and gentle whisper from the lips of Love—"*But* there is forgiveness."

This comes into the soul *after a full confession of sin.* When you have knelt down before God and acknowledged your transgressions and your shortcomings, and your heart is heavy, and your soul is ready to burst with inward anguish, then may you hear this gracious Word of God, "But there is forgiveness." When, under a sense of sin, it seems as if the very fiends of Hell were shrieking in your ears because of the awful doom which is drawing near—when you shall be driven from hope and from the Presence of God, then, when you fall on your face in the terror of your soul because of your iniquity, *then* comes this sweet Word of God—"But there is forgiveness." It is all true which your conscience tells you. It is all true which the Word of God threatens concerning you! Then acknowledge that it is true and bow yourself in the dust before God—and then you shall hear in your soul, not only in your ears, but in your *heart*, this blessed Word of God, "But there is forgiveness."

Some of us remember when we first heard this Word. When it came, it was to us like the clear shining after rain—"But there is forgiveness." Some of us were, perhaps, for weeks and months without any knowledge of this blessed Truth of God—pining for it, hungering for it—and when the Lord brought it home with power into our hearts by the Holy Spirit,

oh, there was no music like it! Angels could not sing any tune so sweet as these Words of God spoken to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, "But there is forgiveness." Go your way, my Hearer, and confess before God all your sin! I will not say what it has been. Perhaps you have lived for many years in the pursuit of sinful pleasures. Perhaps you have been dominated by your own will—you have tried to be lord and master, or queen and mistress of your own wicked spirit. And, perhaps, you have done evil as often as you could, and you are sensible of your sin, and your wounds bleed before God because of it. Well, then, in comes this whisper of hope—"But there is forgiveness." God make it as sweet to you to hear it as it is to me to tell of it!

This whisper of hope sometimes comes to the soul by the Spirit of God *as the result of observation*. A man, full of sin, thinks to himself, "Well, but others, also, have been full of sin, yet they have been forgiven. What if I have been a blasphemer and injurious? Yet so was Saul of Tarsus and he had forgiveness from the Lord. What if I have been a thief? Yet so was he who hung upon the cross, and that day was with his Lord in Paradise. What if I have been a fallen woman, and have been defiled with sin? Yet there is forgiveness, for she was forgiven who was a sinner, and came and washed Christ's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, loving much because she had much forgiven. What, even if I have been an adulterer? Yet such was David. What if I have been a persecutor? Yet such was Manasseh. Into whatever sin I may have fallen, I observe that others like I have been snatched from these horrible pits—and why should not I be?" I would whisper this message into the ear of anybody here who is conscious of sin. If you will but look about you, you will see others like yourself who have been washed, cleansed and sanctified. Some of them are on earth, and many more of them are in Heaven, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Sweet, then, is this whisper of hope arising out of observation of others—"But there is forgiveness."

This whisper also comes in *opposition to the voice of despair*, for despair says to a soul under a sense of sin, "There is no mercy for you! You have sinned beyond all limits. Your death warrant is signed, the verdict has been given against you, there remains nothing for you but everlasting burnings!" No, Soul, God's Word against your word any day! God's Word says, "There is forgiveness," Nothing can destroy despair except a message from God, Himself, and this passage is like a huge hammer to break in sunder the gates of brass and dash in pieces the bars of iron—"There is forgiveness." "All manner of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." In the greatness of His heart, Jehovah declares that He delights in mercy, and this is the song which went up to Him in the old Jewish Church with many a repetition, and is just as true today—

"For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure!
He His chosen race did bless
In the wasteful wilderness.
For His mercies shall endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure.
He has, with a piteous eye,
Looked upon our misery!
For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."

You have not gone beyond His mercy! You cannot go beyond His mercy if you will trust His Son! "There is forgiveness." Let this whisper drive away despair! What a blessed whisper it is! "There is forgiveness." "There is forgiveness." Let it enter your soul and drive those grim ogres and hobgoblins of despair away into the sea of forgetfulness. "There is forgiveness."

This whisper of hope is, further, *the answer to conscience*. When Mr. Conscience is really at work, he has a very terrible voice. There is no lion in the thicket that roars like a truly awakened conscience. Conscience says, "You knew your duty, but you did not do it. You have sinned away many a day of Grace—you have refused Gospel invitations, you have striven against the light of nature and the Light of God—you will go down to Hell well deserving your doom! When the millstone is about your neck, to sink you into the abyss, you will deserve to have it so, for you have earned all this for yourself by your iniquities." I will not seek to stifle conscience, nor ask you to shut your ear to his voice. Let him speak, but still, do you not hear between his roars this sweet note as of a silver harp, "But-but-but-but there is forgiveness"? O conscience, there is forgiveness! I am as guilty as you say I am, and much more, for you cannot see all the sin that I have committed—"but there is forgiveness."

Let me go still further and say that this whisper of hope is *an answer, even, to the Law of God*. The Ten Commandments are like ten great cannons fully charged and if we were, like the rebels in India, tied to the muzzles of them and blown to pieces, it would be only what we deserve! But just when the fuse is lighted and about to be applied, there rings out this blessed Word of God, "There is forgiveness. There is forgiveness." The Law says, "The soul that sins, it shall die," and the Law knows no mercy—it cannot know any mercy. Sinai has never yet yielded one drop of water to cool the parched tongue of a guilty sinner! Never did a shower reach its craggy peaks! It is a mountain of fire and the thunder rolls over its summit with the sound of a trumpet exceedingly loud and long, making all who hear it to tremble!

God, when He comes to judge, must judge according to justice—"but-but-but-but there is forgiveness"! There is another mountain besides Sinai—you have not come unto Mount Sinai—but you have come unto Mount Zion! There is another Lawgiver besides Moses! There is Jesus, the Son of God! There is another Covenant besides the Covenant of Works—there is a Covenant of rich, free, Sovereign Grace, and this is the essence of it—"There is forgiveness." Oh, that I could convey that whisper into the ear of every sinner who is here! I *can* do that, but oh, that God the Holy Spirit would put it into your *heart*, that you might never forget, "There is forgiveness"!

II. Now I advance to my second division. In our text I see, besides the whisper of hope, AN ASSURANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD—

"There is forgiveness with You."

Dear Friends, "there is forgiveness." Nature could never tell you this great Truth of God. You may walk the cornfields at this moment and see the bounty of God in the waving grain, but you cannot read forgiveness there. You may climb the hills and see the beauty of the landscape. You may look upon silver streams that make glad the fields, but you cannot read forgiveness there. You can see the goodness of God to man, but not the mercy of God to sinners! But if you come to this Book, you can read it here.

Turn to the Old Testament and you will see that *it reveals sacrifice*—lambs, bullocks and goats. What did they all mean? They meant that there was a *way of pardon through the shedding of blood*—they taught men this, that God would accept certain sacrifices on their behalf. Then turn to the New Testament and there you will see it revealed more clearly that God has accepted a Sacrifice, the Sacrifice which He, Himself, gave, for, "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." In this Book you read how He can be "just, and the Justifier of him that believes." How He can be a just God and yet a Savior. How He can forgive and yet be just as righteous as if He punished and showed no mercy. This, in fact, is the Revelation of the Gospel! This is what this Book was written to teach, to tell you that, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Therefore we come to you, not merely with a hopeful whisper, but with a full, distinct, emphatic, unquestionable assurance—"There is forgiveness." "There is forgiveness."

Turn to this Word of God and you will find *the certainty of forgiveness*. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." What a grand article of the creed that is! Do you believe it? Then do not doubt, do not hesitate—"There is forgiveness." You must know that there is such a thing, or else you will not be eager to seek for it! It is in vain to go in quest of a myth or a perhaps—but here is a certainty for you. "There is forgiveness." Doubt it not! Believe it to be so and then seek after it with all your heart. "There is forgiveness." That is a matter of certainty.

Notice, if you please, *the broad indefiniteness of the text*—"There is forgiveness." It does not say, "There is forgiveness for this sin or for that," but, "There is forgiveness." Where God draws no limit, do not you draw any! If God sets the door wide open and says, "There is forgiveness," then come along, you sinners, whoever you may be, from jails and penitentiaries! Come along from your Pharisaic places of boasting and self-righteousness! Come along with you, for there is forgiveness even for you! You rich, you poor, you learned, you ignorant that know nothing, know at least this—"There is forgiveness." This text shuts out nobody! I bless God, sometimes, for the grand vagueness of His speech. When He draws lines of distinction, as sometimes He does, then are we anxious to know who is shut in and who is shut out. But when He simply says, "There is

forgiveness," let us jump at it and grasp it by an act of faith and, once let us but grasp it, He will never take it from us, for Jesus Himself said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Notice, too, *the immediate presentness of the text*. Our version has it, "There is forgiveness," but there is no verb in the Hebrew. The translators put in the words, "There is," so we are to read it, "There *was* forgiveness." "There *is* forgiveness." "There *will be* forgiveness as long as life lasts." But I like it as it stands here. "There is forgiveness" *tonight*. "There is forgiveness" *now*. "There is forgiveness" where you sit, just as you are, just now! Oh, that I could say it so as to convince you of the truth of it, and give a grip, a squeeze of my right hand, to each one of you! I would like to do it! O my dear Friends, do not despair, do not be bowed down any longer, "there is forgiveness." There is forgiveness now!

And it is intended to have a *personality about it*. It is no use telling anybody that there is forgiveness for other people, but none for him. This text is made for you, dear Friends, and the preacher is sent to proclaim this Truth of God to you, for he is sent to preach, as far as he can, to every creature under Heaven. "There is forgiveness" for you, though you think there is none! Your thoughts are not as God's thoughts—neither are your ways as His ways. There is, there surely is, at this moment, forgiveness! Oh, that you would prove it by an act of faith! The moment you believe in Christ, your sins are all forgiven! Look to Him whom I would hold up before you, as Moses held up the brazen serpent on the pole! Look, for there is life in a look to Him that died for guilty men—

"There is life for 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."

May this be the moment when the Spirit of God shall make it to be so to many here present! "There is forgiveness."

III. Now I must go a little farther and notice, in the text, A DIRECTION OF WISDOM—"There is forgiveness with You." "With You."

Do you hear this, dear Heart? You are shrinking from your God. You are anxious to run away from Him—*but that is where the forgiveness is*—with God! Where the offense went, from that very place the forgiveness comes—"There is forgiveness with You." "Against You, You only, have I sinned," but, "there is forgiveness with You," with the very God whom you have offended! It is with God in such a way that it *is part of His Nature*. "He delights in mercy." "God is Love." He glorifies Himself by passing by transgression, iniquity and sin. There is forgiveness with God. It is in God's very Nature that it lies. Fly not away, then, from the very place where forgiveness awaits you!

"There is forgiveness with You." Some read the passage, "There is a propitiation with You." Now, *the Lord Jesus Christ is that Propitiation*, and He is with God. He has gone up into Glory and He is at the right hand of the Father even now. Make your way to God, for the Propitiation is there before you! Meet your God at the Mercy Seat lest you have to meet Him

at the Judgement Seat! There is forgiveness always with God, for Jesus is always there. Therefore, go to Him and find it.

"There is forgiveness with You," that is to say, *God has it in His immediate gift.* He will not have to hunt for it, for it is with Him, He has it ready to bestow! He will not need you to plead for it with so many sighs, cries and tears, but He has it waiting for you. The writ by which you shall be set free is already made out! "There is forgiveness with You." The Lord Jehovah has signed you free pardon, it lies before Him now—go and take it! "There is forgiveness with You," immediately, and if you do but believe in Jesus, you shall receive it from His hand!

"There is forgiveness with You." Then, depend upon it, there is *a way for forgiveness to get to me,* for if God has it, He can somehow get to me with it! I may be far off from hope. I may be surrounded, as it were, with brick walls, shut in like a man in one of the dungeons of the Bastille, where men lay till they were forgotten and the very jailer did not know who they were, nor when they came there. If you are even in such a sad state as *that*, God can get at you—there is forgiveness with Him—and He can get it to you!

And if it is with God, then *there is a way for you to get to it*, for there is One come who stands between you and God! There is a Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus—but you do not need a mediator between Christ and yourself—you can come to Him just as you are! You need a Mediator with God and there is Jesus Christ, who is God and Man, able to lay His hands both on you and on your gracious God, and to bring you into His Presence!

I feel somehow certain that I am going to have some souls, tonight, to be my reward. I love to ring those charming bells, "Free Grace and dying love." A great part of the pleasure of preaching is derived from the fact that I know that God's Word will not return to Him void, but that some who hear the Gospel message will receive it and be saved! Listen to this Word of God, you doubting, trembling, despairing sinner—"there is forgiveness"—that forgiveness is with God! If I told you that it was with me and that I was the priest, perhaps you would be foolish enough to believe me. But I will tell you no such lie! It is not with any priest on earth—it is with the Lord! "There is forgiveness with You," and you may go to God just as you are, with nothing in you hands, and cast yourself at His feet, quoting the name of His dear Son. Rest there and the work is done, for, as God lives, it is true, that there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared!

IV. I close with this word. The last part of the text shows A DESIGN OF LOVE—"There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

Somebody said, "I should have thought that it would have read, "that You may *be loved.*" Yes, so I would have thought, but then, you see, fear, especially in the Old Testament, *includes* love! It includes every holy feeling of reverence, worship and obedience towards God. That is the Old Testament name for true religion—"*the fear of God.*" So I might say that the text declares, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be loved,

worshipped and served." Still, even in the sense of fear, it is a most blessed fact that they who fear the Lord are delightful to Him. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."

Do you not see how it is, dear Friends, that men fear the Lord because He forgives their sins? It must be so because, first, if He did not forgive their sins, *there would be nobody left to fear Him*, for they would all die! If He were to deal with men after their sins, He must sweep the whole race of mankind off the face of the earth! But there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared.

Next, if it were certain that God did not pardon sin, *everybody would despair*, and so, again, there would be nobody to fear Him, for a despairing heart grows hard like the nether millstone. Because they have no hope, men go on to sin worse and worse—but there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. The devils never repent, for there is no pardon for them. There is no Gospel preached in Hell and, consequently, there is no relenting, no repenting, no turning towards God among lost spirits. But there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared by you. What a wonderful effect pardon has upon a man!

What a wonderful effect it has upon a man to know that he is pardoned, to be sure that he is forgiven! *He begins to tremble all over*. Remember how it is written, "And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."

A man who has been forgiven is afraid that he should go and sin again after such love and such mercy. He is melted down by the goodness of the Lord. He does not know what to make of it. For a time he can hardly believe that it is true! I know that when I was converted, I felt at first like Peter when the great iron gate was opened, and the angel brought him out of prison. He knew not what was done to him by the angel and he thought he saw a vision—he could not believe it to be true that he was really released! So is it with the saved sinner—you are so amazed, you are so overwhelmed, that you are filled with fear at the intense delight of pardon, being half afraid that it cannot really be true that such a wretch as you can have been pardoned and that all your iniquities are blotted out forever! The wondrous Grace of God makes you tremble with a holy reverential fear and you sing, with Dr. Watts—

"When God revealed His gracious name
And changed my mournful state,
My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,
The Grace appeared so great!"

Are there any of God's people here who are afraid that they do not fear God enough? If you want to revive your fear of God and have it deepened,

believe in your pardon. Believe! It is a singular way to come to fear God, but *believe* that you are forgiven, *prize* your forgiveness, *know* that your sins are blotted out, *cling* to the Cross and all that sweet fear of God, by which is meant the *whole of piety*, will abound in your soul!

Some think that it will be a good way of deepening their Graces to begin to question whether they are Christians. That is the wrong way altogether! Unbelief does not heal anybody—it is *faith* that heals! Believe up to the hilt! Believe, come what may! Believe in Christ, though your sins rage and rave and roar! Believe in Christ, though the devil tells you, you are damned! Should Hell seem to open at your feet, believe in your pardon through the precious blood! Do not stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, and you shall feel yourself filled with a holy fear, joy, peace, love, zeal and a burning desire to serve Him who has done all this for you! "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

If any of you poor people, here, who have not yet found the Savior, are saying, "We wish that we could feel our sin more. We wish that we could fear the Lord more." Let me tell you that this fear is to come to you *afterwards*. There is forgiveness, first, and *then* the fear comes afterwards. All the fear in the world that is worth having is the result of pardoned sin. The fear that is not to be cast out, the fear that has no torment in it, is that fear which comes of a sense of every iniquity being blotted out! I charge you, believe in Jesus Christ! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I say to you unbelieving ones—Believe in Him now! Rise, take up your bed, and walk. I, who have no power whatever of myself, yet speaking in my Master's name, know that His power will go with His Gospel and that His Word shall not return to Him void. Believe and live! God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 129; 130; 131.

Three Songs of degrees.

Psalm 129:1, 2. *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.* The trials of some of God's people begin very early. When first we put on the armor of God, the adversary is usually very bitter against us. Some of our old friends and acquaintances cannot bear to see the change in us—and they bitterly oppose us—so that God's children may have to say, "From our youth they have afflicted us." But you must not think that the beginning of sorrows will be the end of them. Oh, no! "Many a time have they afflicted me." God's children are often called to pass under the rod and the rod is frequently held in the hands of the children of men. Your Savior carried the Cross and He expects you to carry it, too. He does not tell you to take it up now and then, but to take it up *always*, and to follow Him with a constant will, cheerfully bearing it for His dear name's sake. "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet"—is not that sweetly put?—"yet they have not

prevailed against me." You remember how Joseph's brothers envied him and, at last, sold him into Egypt? Yet from the dungeon he rose to the throne and he could say, "Yet they have not prevailed against me." If you are of the seed royal, one of the chosen people of God, they shall not prevail against you! Even proud Haman, with all his plotting, was not able to overcome poor Mordecai! And the Lord your God will preserve you from the fury of all your adversaries and bring good to you out of all the evil they try to do to you.

3. *The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.* Like one that has been cruelly scourged until each cut of the lash seemed to make a furrow through the quivering flesh. "The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows." How truly could our blessed Lord utter these words when He was delivered up to wicked men to be scourged!

4. *The LORD is righteous: He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked.* "The Lord is righteous." *There* is our hope and comfort! He takes away from them the scourge and cuts up the cords of which it is made. And those cords with which they would bind the righteous He cuts into pieces, so that they can do nothing against them—"He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked."

5. *Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.* So it seems that the one aimed at and made to suffer is the Church of God—"Zion." She has often been scourged and afflicted! Her experience is like that of her Covenant Head, and her triumph will be like His triumph.

6-8. *Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up: wherewith the mower fills not his hand; nor he that binds sheaves to his bosom. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.* So the adversaries of the Church of God may grow as fast as grass on the roof of a house, but they will perish just as fast, and there will be nothing left of them! They threaten, they bully, they rage, they rave—but it is only for a little while. Now we will read the "De Profundis" Psalm.

Psalm 130:1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* God's people have to go into the depths and God's people pray in the depths—and often they pray best in the depths! The rarest pearls lie deepest in the sea and the most precious prayers come out of the depths of affliction—"Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Cannot many of you say the same? Looking back upon your past afflictions and trials, yet you can feel that you did pray in them. He that can pray in the depths will soon sing in the heights! If you can pray, you cannot be drowned by all the seas that roll over you. God who brought you into them will bring you out of them if you can pray.

2. *Lord,* Or, "Adonai," Sovereign Lord—

2. *Hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* "Hear me, Lord!" What is the use of prayer if God does not hear it? It is said to be a profitable spiritual exercise. So it is, because we believe that God hears it! But apart from that, it would be an idle waste of

words. "Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications."

3. *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Not one of *us*, surely! If God were to now deal with us according to our sins, who among us could stand in His Presence?

4, 5. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope.* See, this is all in the first person. Dear Friend, can you use it in the first person? Can you say, "I wait for Jehovah"? Blessed are they that are content to wait His will, but yet, with holy eagerness, are prepared to do that will or to suffer it, as He pleases. "My soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope." All my hope is there. If it were not for His promises I would have no confidence, but one Word of God is better than all the things that can be seen! It is better to trust in God's declaration than in man's oaths. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

6. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.* I say, more than they that watch for the morning! Those on the sick bed, who long for their weary waiting to be over. Those afflicted ones who cry in the night of pain, "Would God it were morning!" Those, too, that stand as sentinels, the night before the battle, or after the fight, watch and long to see the morning light. There are many such weary waiters and my soul is one of them, waiting for the Lord, "more than they that watch for the morning."

7. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.* Enough to buy us back from all our slavery and to buy back our inheritance as well. Our Redeemer is the redeemer of the inheritance that has been mortgaged and now is burdened by the enormous debt of sin—"with Him is plenteous redemption."

8. *And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* That is our worst slavery, our in-equities, our lack of equity, our having acted unfairly to God and unfairly to man. He will redeem us from all that evil—yes, He has redeemed us by price—and He will redeem us by power!

Psalm 131:1. *LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.* I commend this verse to some who profess to be Christians, but who are always puzzling their poor brains with intricate questions—who want to solve the mystery of where free will and predestination can meet, how man can be responsible and yet God's predestination can be fulfilled—and I know not what beside! These are great waters the waves whereof are too big for our little boats! We have quite enough to do, my Brothers, to attend to the plain things of God's Word, and to strive after holiness and the salvation of our fellow men, without addicting ourselves to tying knots and trying to untie them! It is an unprofitable business—it genders to pride rather than to anything else—and well did David say, "My heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me."

2. *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.* That is a very blessed thing to be able to do, to quiet yourself when, like a weaned child, you are crying under the afflicting hand of God—when you feel a proud spirit murmuring, or when you want to pierce the darkness that veils Divine Truth and want to understand what cannot be understood—and you worry because you are not Omniscient. Oh, it is a blessed thing, then, to say to yourself, "Be quiet, child! Be quiet!" What are you but a child, after all, at your best? What do you know? What *can* you know? Are you not satisfied to hear your Father say, "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter"? Do you not know that here we know but in part, and see but in part? By-and-by, we shall know even as we are known, but not yet. "I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother"—as a child who sucks his thumb and goes to sleep, sobbing—"my soul is even as a weaned child." David did not say, "My soul is even as a *weaning* child"—fretting, worrying, wanting to have its own will. There is no happiness in that state! But when it is not the, "ing," but the, "ed"—not the present participle, but the past—then we get into comfort! "My soul is even as a weaned child," who has given up his old comfort, which he thought was as necessary to him as his life. He finds that, after all, he can live without it, and grow without it, and come to a better manhood without it than with it! "My soul is even as a weaned child."

3. *Let Israel hope in the LORD*—You will never be weaned from Him if you are His, but if you are weaned from the world, so as to have all your hope in the Lord, thrice happy are you! Now, too, you will grow. Now you will come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus which you could never have done if you had not been weaned! I remember that when Sarah weaned Isaac, there was a great feast at the weaning, and I believe that God's children often have a great feast at their weaning from the world. All the while they are but babes and suck their comforts from the world, they get but little real joy. But when, by Divine Grace, they outgrow that state of things, then is there a great feast made for them!

3. *From henceforth and forever.* That is real comfort that you may always enjoy, hoping in the Lord from henceforth and forever! In life and in death here is a blessed confidence that will never fail you! God grant that we may enjoy it now and evermore! 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.

THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER
NO. 2423

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 28, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 10, 1887.

"There came a woman of Samaria to draw water:
Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink."
John 4:7.

THIS was the beginning of that interesting conversation which not only blessed this woman, but has been a means of Grace to many others ever since, for this chapter and the previous one must be looked upon as among the most soul-winning parts of God's Word. I suppose that every portion of Scripture has had its use in the experience of men and women, but these two chapters have very, very largely been blessed in the commencement of the Divine Life. Many have been led through the door of regeneration and the gateway of faith by the Truth of God so plainly taught in them.

I shall not delay you with any preface, but shall take you at once to the subject mentioned in our text.

I. You have before you, here, first, THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Give Me a drink." I speak to many here who are wise to win souls. I hope that I also address many more who, although they have not yet learned this wisdom, are anxious, if possible, to be used of God to bless their fellow creatures. Here, then, is a perfect model for you—study it and copy it.

First, observe that our Savior, as the model Soul-Winner, was *not reserved and distant*. "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." If He had not been wonderfully anxious to win a soul, He would have kept Himself to Himself—and if this woman had spoken to Him, He would have answered her shortly and have let her see that He did not desire any conversation with her. There is a way of being civil, but, at the same time, of repressing anything like familiarity. There are some persons who have great gifts of freezing—they can freeze you, almost, with a look! You never dare to speak to them, again. In fact, you stand and wonder how you could ever have had the impertinence to address such exalted personages! They evidently live in a very distinct world from that in which your poor self resides—they could not sympathize with you—they are too good or too great, too clever. And if you do not complain of their conduct, yet you give them a wide berth and keep clear of them in the future, for they are not at all the sort of people that

attract you. They repel you by their coldness. They are not magnets, or, if so, they exercise the very opposite influence from that of attraction.

Now, if any of you are in such a frame of mind as that, pray the Lord to bring you out of it! But do not attempt to do any good while you are in such a condition, for you might as well try to heat an oven with snowballs as to win souls for Christ with a distant cold, dignified manner of speech! No, cast all that away, for nothing can render you so feeble, and so useless, as to cultivate anything like separateness from your fellows. Come close to the sinner, draw near to him or to her—show that you are not keeping yourself to yourself, but that you regard the person you are addressing as a brother or sister—as one who will find, in you, a sympathizer who is touched with the feeling of his infirmities, seeing that you have suffered in many points like he has suffered and are, therefore, on the same level, and desire to stand on the same platform with him—and to do him good.

There was nothing stiff and starched about the Savior. He was the very reverse of that and even *children* felt that they might go to Him freely. He was like a great harbor into which sailors run their ships in stress of weather—they feel as if it was made on purpose for them. The very look of Christ's face, the very glistening of His eyes, everything about Him made people feel that He did not live for Himself at all, but that He desired to bless others! There is the model Soul-Winner, therefore, for your imitation, in Jesus sitting on the well and condescending even to speak to a poor fallen woman!

In the next place, our Savior was *aggressive and prompt*. He did not wait for the woman to speak to Him, but He addressed her. "Give Me a drink," He said. He did not wait until she had drawn the water from the well and was about to go—and so give her an excuse for saying, "I cannot be detained. I must get home with the water and the sun is hot," but no sooner has He seen her and her waterpot, than He begins a conversation with His request to her, "Give Me a drink." The true soul-winner is like a man who goes out shooting—he is not half asleep so that when the game presents itself, he waits till it has taken wing and has gone. He is on the alert—if a feather or a leaf moves, he has his gun all ready, and he is prepared for action at once! The cunning fowler spreads his nets early in the morning before the birds are awake, that when they first begin to move, they may be taken in his traps. And the Lord Jesus, with a loving wisdom, went about His work. He began with the woman at once—as soon as she came to the well where He was resting, He spoke to her and soon led the talk to the things which concerned the Christ and her own sin—and the way by which the Christ might lift her out of her sin and make her useful for the conversion of others.

I am afraid that there are some of you who cannot do that—you are so reserved, you say. How often have I told you that the soldier who was so "retiring" was shot? There was a battle going on and the man was so modest and retiring that he went to the rear of the fight—and they called him a coward and shot him dead! I am not going to call you a coward,

nor to shoot you! Still, I wish you would not get into the rear so much. While souls are perishing, it does not do to be reserved and retiring! A man who can swim and would let his fellow man sink would hardly be excused if he said, "I was so retiring that I could not push myself upon him. I never had the good man's card and I did not want to force myself upon him without an introduction, so I let him drown. I was very sorry, but still, I never was a pushing person."

Are you going to let men be damned? Are you going to let the masses of people in this city perish in their sins? If so, God have mercy upon you! The question will not be, "What will become of London in this case?" But the question will be, "What will become of you who let men die in their sins without trying to rescue them?" Carry the war into the enemy's country! Speak to people whom you do not know, whom you have never seen before, as Jesus did! Speak to that woman whom you meet casually and Providentially, as He did! Speak to her when the last thing she wants is that you should speak to her. Speak out at once and let yours be an aggressive Christianity that is prompt to seize every opportunity of doing good! What a model Soul-Winner, then, you have here!

Next, the Savior was *bold, but He was also wise*. You cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of our blessed Lord that He spoke to this woman while she was alone. He could not have said to her what He said and she would never have said to Him what *she* said, if anybody else had been there. It was necessary that this interview be held in private. But, oh, you who are so zealous that you are imprudent, you who would gladly win souls but attempt the task without that care which ought to come naturally to every sensible and prudent man, remember that although Christ spoke alone with this woman, it was in broad daylight, at twelve o'clock, by the well. If some people had been as prudent as the Savior was, they could have afforded to be as zealous as they have been! In the case of such a woman as this, I would have you remember the Savior's wisdom as well as His wondrous condescension!

With Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, He speaks by night, but with the harlot of Samaria He speaks by day. The soul-winner looks about him, he is wise in his plan of going to work. There are fish that will only bite in troubled waters. There are some that are not to be taken except at night and there are others that are only to be caught by daylight. Fit yourself to the case of the person you are seeking to bless! I do not say be so prudent that you will run no risk, but I *will* say, be so prudent, especially in certain difficult cases, that you run no *unnecessary* risk! The Savior could not have selected a better time for talking to such a person—you will see at once that if even the disciples marveled that He spoke with the woman—it was infinitely wise on His part that it was done at the well side and done at noon.

O Soul-Winners, win souls any way you can! Be willing to risk your own reputation, if necessary, to win them, but it is not necessary, or not *usually* necessary, and it never should be done except when it *is* necessary. Your Savior sets you that wise example. Follow Him in this speak-

ing to people singly. I do so much of public preaching that, perhaps, I lose a measure of adaptation for private conversation, yet have I sometimes done the most successful work I have ever done in private rather than in public! Sitting at a table, I have marked a young man who was a stranger to me, and I have asked him to accompany me to the place where I was to preach. I did not know the way and I asked him to walk with me. A few words on the road won him for Christ and he has been, ever since, an earnest upholder of the Gospel and a very useful one! I do not know whether any were saved by the sermon, but I know that *one* was converted by the talk on the way there!

I know an Evangelist who is useful in his public service, but he is also greatly useful to the families in the homes where he stays. Almost in every case the minister's sons and daughters are converted before he leaves the house, or the servant or a visitor is won by his private conversation. I like that kind of work! Oh, that we all studied this art of speaking to persons one by one! So I say to you, again, here is the model Soul-Winner—copy His example.

Observe how the Savior begins with this woman—"Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink." When you are fishing, it is not always wise to throw your fly straight at the fish's mouth. Try him a little on one side, and then a little on the other side, and maybe, presently, you will get a bite. So the Savior does not begin by saying to her, "You are a sinful woman." Oh, dear, none but an amateur in such a business would begin like that! Neither did He begin by saying, "Now, good mistress, I am the Messiah." Well, that was the truth, was it not? Yes, but that was not to come *first*—He began by saying, "Give Me a drink." He must first attract her attention and influence her mind—then would come the closer work of probing her conscience and changing her heart!

It was only a very ordinary, commonplace request that Jesus made. "Give Me a drink." It might have occurred to any one of you to say it, but not to use it as He did. Yet it was a word that was wisely chosen, for it fitted in with the woman's thoughts. She was thinking about drawing water and Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." There could be no more suitable metaphor or mode of expression than that of water and drinking if you are talking to a person who has come to draw water for herself or others to drink.

Besides that, it was an exceedingly pregnant expression, as full of meaning as an egg is full of meat. "Give Me a drink." It contained much within itself. It gave the Savior as wide a field as He could wish for to talk to her about her *spiritual* thirst, and about that Living Water which He could put within her, which would abide in her, and be a well—not one to which she should come—but a well that she would carry about with her and that would be always springing up within her unto everlasting life! So let us learn how to begin wisely with observations that are apparently commonplace, but such as will easily lead to higher things.

I think that the Savior, as the model Soul-Winner, is also to be imitated in that *at the very beginning He broke down a barrier.* The Lord Je-

sus Christ was evidently dressed as a Jew and this woman came out of Samaria. Now, at once, there was a barrier between the two, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Our Lord broke through that caste by saying to her, "Give Me a drink." No other expression would do this so well, for to eat and to drink with persons was, after the Oriental fashion, to come into communion with them. "Give Me a drink," therefore, shook off from Him all Judaism which would separate Him from this Samaritan. If you are going to try to win people for Christ, always seek to break down everything that would separate. Are you a man of wealth? Well, I do not believe in converting souls by making your diamond rings glitter and flash when you are talking to workingmen.

Are you a scientific man? Now, that word of 17 syllables that you have been so fond of—do not use it, but say something very plain and simple! Or do you happen to belong to any political party? Do not bring that question in—you will not win souls that way—you will be more likely to excite prejudice and opposition. If I were talking to the French, I would devoutly wish I were a Frenchman. If I had to win a German, I should wish to know as much of the idiosyncrasies of that nation as I possibly could. I shall never be ashamed of being an Englishman, but if I could win more souls by being a Dutchman, or a Zulu, I would gladly have any kind of nationality, that I might get at the hearts of men! And our Lord Jesus acted just in that spirit when He said to the woman, "Give Me a drink." He sank the noble dignity of being a Jew—for, mark you, a Jew is the aristocrat of God—Jesus, even in His humanity, came of a race that is made up of the oldest and noblest of earthly nobility, but He dropped that dignity in order that He might talk to this Samaritan woman who was nothing better than a mongrel, for her race was made up of nobody knows what! They pretended to be Jewish when there was anything to get by so doing—and to be Gentile whenever the Jews were in any kind of difficulties. But Jesus did not snub her, nor did He hint that she was in the least degree inferior to Himself. There is no winning souls in any other way than as the Savior won them. God teach us how to win them!

This must suffice for that first point, the model Soul-Winner.

II. Now for just a few minutes I want to exhibit our Divine Lord and Master in another light. Not this time as the model Soul-Winner, but as THE MASTER OF CONDESCENSION. He seems to me to be so thoughtful—this blessed Lord of ours, the Son of God, the Creator, the First-Begotten of God.

He takes His seat there on the well in weariness and thirst. Do you not see Him almost ready to faint? What condescension this was, that *He was so straitened that He had not even a drink of water*, or the means to get it. Maker of all springs! Bearer of the key of the rain! Lord of the ocean and yet He needs water to drink? What a stoop is this, for your Lord and mine to come to this! When He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," He had come very low, but now, even the water, which is such a common thing around us that it ripples from the hills and streams

through the vales—even that has fled from Him—and He says, "Give Me a drink." Bless your Lord, O you who love Him! Kiss His feet and wonder at His marvelous condescension!

I wonder at His condescension, next, that He not only came into such straitness, but that *He was so humble as to ask for a drink of water.* He that hears prayer, Himself prays! He that listens to the cries of His redeemed and, with the fullness of His majestic bounty, opens His hands and supplies the needs of every living thing, sits there and says to the woman, "Give Me a drink." O Master, how You have straitened Yourself! How You have humbled Yourself, that You should be a beggar of one of Your own creatures, asking for a sip of water!

Admire that condescension still more when you think that HE asked it of her, of her who had had five husbands and he with whom she was living was not her husband! Yet Jesus says to her, "Give Me a drink." Some of you good women would not have touched her with a pair of tongs, would you? And some of you good men would have passed by her on the other side. Jesus, however, was not only willing to give to her, but He was willing to *receive* from her! He would put Himself under obligation to a Samaritan sinner! So He says to her, who was not fit to come near Him to unloose the laces of His shoes—John the Baptist said that He was not worthy to do that—but what was she worthy to do? Yet Jesus says even to her, "Give Me a drink."

Then notice His condescension, again, when she answers Him tartly with a reply that was perhaps civil in tone, but that was virtually a refusal, *He did not upbraid her.* He did not say to her, "Oh, you cruel woman!" No, not a syllable or look of reproof did He give her. He needed not the water that was in the well—He meant to have her *heart*—and He did have it and, therefore, He went on to speak to her. Is not that a beautiful text, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not"? So the Savior will not give this woman a word of upbraiding—she shall be led to upbraid herself—but it shall be for her *sin*! She shall not be upbraided for her ungenerous reply that the Savior has passed over.

This is the crown of Christ's condescension, that He led her not to do what He asked her to do, but *He led her to confess her sin.* He said, "Give Me a drink," but apparently she did not let down that waterpot, neither did He put it to His lips, parched as they were. But He led her to her confession of sin, her faith in Him, her running to call the men—and all this gave Him meat to eat and water to drink that others knew not of! He had won a soul and this had refreshed Him after His weariness. We do not hear of His being weary any more—He shook it all off at sight of that sinner saved! He was Himself, again, for He had received what He would die to win. He had received a heart returning to the great Father, He had found a soul that trusted in Him!

I wish that I knew how to preach better so that I might lead you to my Master, for I do want you to glorify Him. I have often tried to set Him before you as He hung upon the Cross, and as He will come again in His

glorious Second Advent. But just now I ask you to adore Him in His weariness as He sits upon the well! He is never lovelier than in His lowliness. There is a grandeur about Him when He rides to battle on His white horse and summons the kites and eagles to devour the slain, but we start back from that terrible vision of majesty to the attractiveness of His Love when He thus humbles Himself and makes Himself of no reputation and talks with a fallen woman! Seeing Him thus condescending, we love, reverence, admire and adore Him! Let us do so now.

III. I shall have done when I have taken up my third point with considerable brevity, but with no little earnestness. It is this. You have seen the model Soul-Winner and the Master of condescension. Let us now notice THE MANNER OF THE WORKING OF GRACE with the view that we may see it here this evening.

So you have come here, my Friend. You have not come to be saved. Oh, no! That is very far from your mind. You came to see the place, you came to look at a building to which a crowd will come and listen to a minister of the Gospel. Yes, yes, but even that is no reason why you should not get a blessing, for *this woman only came to draw water.* "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water." She had no desire to see Jesus, or to learn of Him. She was only looking for water! Saul went to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom! So you may find what you never sought and you may be found of Him whom you never sought!

Listen! Open your ears! Perhaps your Day of Grace has come and the great silver bell is striking the hour of your salvation—I hope that it is so. It may be so, though you have no thought of it. You are not converted, you are not a Christian, but you would like to do good in the world, would you not? You desire to do some kindly action, something generous. I have known that thought arise in a great many who yet did not know the Lord. Some people will not ask an unconverted person to give money. I would, for my Master said to a woman who was a great sinner, "Give Me a drink." It may be to the everlasting good of some of you to do something for the Church of God, to do something for the Christ of God! Before you know where you are, it may be that you will commit yourselves by some kindly act. I wish you would do so.

The way to win a person to yourself is not always to do him good, but to let him do you good. Jesus knew that, so He began by saying, "Give Me a drink." So sometimes it may be wise—and I would try it now—to say to some of you, "You would like to do someone good, would you not? You would like to do some kindly action." Well, notice, the Master is here, tonight, and He has come with much the same cry as He came to the Samaritan woman. *Jesus says to you, "Give Me a drink."* "Oh," you say, "What could I give Christ to drink? If He were here, I would gladly give Him a drink. I am sure that if I were at my cottage door and He passed by on a dusty day, I would gladly turn the handle of the well and bring up a bucket of water. Though I am not converted, I would do that." Well, dear Heart, you may do that! I want you to do it! It is your privilege to refresh the very heart of Christ! If you were not a sinner, you could not do

it, but being a guilty sinner, you can do it! Your very guilt and sin give you the possibility of refreshing Him. "How?" you ask. Why, repent of your sin! Have done with it, quit it, turn from it. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." It does not say that the *angels* rejoice, though I have no doubt that they do, but it is said, "There is joy *in the presence* of the angels." That is, the angels see the joy of Christ when a sinner repents! They spy it out and notice it. If you let fall a tear of repentance. If in your heart there is a sense of shame because of your sin. If in your soul there is the resolve to escape from it, you have refreshed Him!

Next, guilty as you are, *you can refresh Him by seeking salvation from Him*. Did He not say to the woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water"? And when she said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water," that refreshed Him! Ask this of Him, now, quietly in your soul. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit persuade you to do so! Cry to Him to save you! Say, "Lord Jesus, save me! I am but a girl and careless, but save me." "I am a young man and thoughtless, but save me tonight." By so doing, you have given Him a drink, and He is already refreshed! The sweetest drink of all is when you perceive that He is the Christ, and that God has sent Him to save you—and you give yourself up to be saved by Him!

Trust Him now—may the good Spirit lead you to trust Him now! So will you refresh Him—this is the recompense for all His wounds and even for His death—when sinful souls come and trust Him. I remember hearing of one who, while walking the fields, found a little bird fly into his bosom. He could not understand why the creature should come there, but when he looked up, there was a hawk which had pursued the bird, and the little thing had flown into the bosom of the man for shelter. What do you think? Did the man tear it in pieces? No. He kept it safely till he had taken it away from the place where the hawk was—and then he gave it its liberty again. The Lord Jesus Christ will do just that with you if you trust Him! Sin pursues you—fly to His bosom, for only there are you safe!

I have heard of a great king who had pitched his royal pavilion and when he was about to move it, he found that a bird had come and built its nest there. He was such a king that, although the pavilion was of silk, he ordered his soldiers not to take it down until that bird's young ones were hatched and could fly. I love the generosity of a prince who will act like that, but my Lord is a nobler and kinder Prince than all others! Oh, what a Prince He is for generosity! Poor bird, if you will dare to trust Him and make your nest in the pavilion where He dwells, you shall never be destroyed, nor your hope, either, but you shall be safe forever!

Oh, that I knew how to bring you to Christ, dear Hearers! This is a hot summer's night and you are weary, perhaps, of my talking, but I would not mind that if I could bring you to Jesus! Oh, that I might have fruit from this sermon! This week I believe I might say that I have met and heard of hundreds who, in past years, have been brought to the Savior

by the printed sermons. They came to me, grasped my hand, and thanked me—and I praised God—but then I thought, "Yes, God did bless me, and He has blessed the printed sermons, but I want *present* fruit, and to see sinners, *now*, close in with Christ and be eternally saved." Is all that I preach to you only a dream or a fiction? Then, fling it away from you and despise both it and me! But if it is true and if I only tell you of a true salvation, and a true Savior, come and have it, come and trust Him now, for He casts out none who come to Him! May this be the deciding time with many of you, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-32.

Verses 1-4. *When, therefore, the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again into Galilee. And He needed to go through Samaria.* When He was needed in so many places, He did not care to stay among the Pharisees where He was not wanted. They would not receive His message, so He left the lordly professors and went to look after a fallen woman! Christ's estimates of usefulness are not always the same as ours. We think it a grand thing to be the means of converting a great man—Christ thinks it a worthy work to convert a great *sinner*!

5. *Then He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph.* You remember how the Patriarch said to his favorite son, "Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." This was "the parcel of ground" which was near to Sychar.

6. *Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.* What could the wearied Savior do? Why, He could save a great sinner! And now that He is no more wearied, what can He *not* do? Brethren, when you go to preach or to teach, you like to feel fresh and vigorous, but do not think that this state is at all necessary! Your wearied Master won the woman at Samaria. So may you win souls, even in your weariness! Let us not make excuses for ourselves because we do not feel fit for our work. God may bless us more when we feel weary than He does at any other time.

6. *And it was about the sixth hour.* Twelve o'clock in the day, I suppose. Was that the time when the women usually came to draw water? No, but it was the time when a woman who was shunned by other women would be most likely to come—and the Savior knew that. She had to take odd times to get to the well, for her neighbors did not care to be seen in the company of such a reprobate as she was—and she was probably just as anxious to avoid them.

7, 8. *Then came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink. (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat).* Or, "food."

9. *Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* The woman seemed to say to the Savior, "You Jews will not acknowledge us until You want something from us! Now that You happen to be thirsty, You do not mind asking for a drink from me, but, at other times, You will have no dealings with us." This was a tart reply to our Lord's request, but He did not answer the woman in the tone *she* had adopted. When you are dealing with a soul, you must not lose your temper because of a sharp word, a hard saying, or even a blasphemous reply. Soul-winners must be very tender and gentle. God make us so!

10. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* Oh, that ignorance, that baneful ignorance! "If you knew, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you." Sometimes, my Brothers and Sisters, the key of a man's salvation may lie in your instructing him in the simplest matters of the Gospel, for, if he does but *know*, he will ask—and Christ will give! Great issues may depend upon this, which seems but the turning of a straw. Therefore, go and tell men the way of salvation, for, in the most of cases, ignorance, alas, bars the door! I mean not among those who have long heard the Gospel, but I mean the outsiders who do not know anything about it. Tell it to them and you may, thereby, open to them the Kingdom of Heaven.

11-14. *The woman said to Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where, then, have You that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said to her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* So you see, my dear Hearer, if you get Grace from Christ, you really possess it and it is of that nature that it remains in you and becomes, itself, a spring within you, "springing up into everlasting life." It is not that temporary, trumpery salvation which some preach, which saves you for a quarter of a year and then lets you perish! It is everlasting salvation! Once received, it does not pass away like that little dribbling shower that watered the pavement just now, and is gone, but it shall be in you a well of water, springing up, a living and enduring principle, or, to use another Scriptural expression, "incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever." This salvation is worth your having! Then, get it! It is worth your pining after, praying for and believing. Oh, that you might have it, even you! As soon as you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, it is yours, and yours forever!

15. *The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* The woman had not even the faintest idea of the *spiritual* truth of which Christ had spoken to her. The fact is, *conviction* must come before conversion. No sinner is made alive till he is first killed. You cannot clothe him till he is naked. So now the Savior began that conviction work in this woman—and He did it very wisely. He did not, at first, charge her with criminality, but He led her to *accuse herself*.

16, 17. *Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.* And, as she said it, no doubt she tried to look as innocent as possible. But a guilty flush stole over her face despite her attempt to keep it back.

17. *Jesus said to her, you have well said, I have no husband.* Always give people credit for what is well said. If you want to win them, you must mind that you are not rough with them, but admit what you can of the truth in their utterance—"you have well said, I have no husband."

18, 19. *For you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly. The woman said unto Him, Sir, I Perceive that You are a Prophet.* It would have been better if she had perceived that she was a sinner! Perhaps she did perceive it, but scarcely cared, yet, to confess it openly, so she said, "I perceive that You are a Prophet." Now she has a religious difficulty and what man or woman is there in the world, however far gone from morality, who has not some religious difficulties? And the more immoral they become, the more difficulties they are pretty sure to have. I hate that style of preaching which is everlastingly pandering to difficulties which never would exist except in a dissolute generation like the present! We preach a plain Gospel and when men's hearts are right, it is all plain to them. To him who desires to understand, difficulties soon cease to be a trouble! We had better deal with men's hearts and lives than try to answer their quibbling questions. This was the woman's dilemma—

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.* That is, Mount Gerizim—

20-23. *And You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what—we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him.* You see, Brothers and Sisters, all the difficulties that arise are but temporary! Put them away and get to the great spiritual business that concerns us all—the truly seeking after God in spirit and in truth! If you really want to find God, you shall find Him. He is already seeking you and your very desire after Him is the proof that He has already had dealings with you by His Spirit! Therefore, come unto Him and come at once, "for the Father seeks such to worship Him."

24-27. *God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The woman said to Him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus*

said to her, I that speak unto you am He. And upon this came His disciples. This gracious work of the Master had been done in private. Christ knew that such a person as this woman was not to be spoken to in the presence of His disciples, who were scarcely sympathetic enough for such service. But her heart is now won by the Messiah! So now you may come in, you disciples! Providence shut the door and kept them waiting a while until this delicate piece of work was done!

27. *And marveled that He talked with the woman.* These men who had, themselves, been picked off the dunghill, marveled that Christ spoke to this woman! So have I known some who were, themselves, once grievous sinners, yet they have become horribly conceited some years after conversion. And they have thought that other great sinners might not be saved as they were! God deliver from such abominable pride any soul that professes to be saved! Every Believer should feel, "If the Lord has saved *me*, He can save *anybody*." And that state of mind ought always to be ours.

27. *Yet no man said, What seek You? or, Why talk You with her?* They had some sense left, sense enough to keep silent.

28. *The woman then left her waterpot*—Possessed only with one thought, going to tell others the glad news she. herself. had believed! She "left her waterpot."

28, 29. *And went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?* They must have been surprised to hear her talking about good things. There was no more likely messenger to win men, or to strike them with curiosity, than such a woman as this.

30-32. *Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of.* So has every man who lives to win souls for Christ! There is a table which he enters where the very delicacies of God are brought before him and his soul is sustained and his strength is renewed by the dainties that the Lord has provided for those who do His will! Brothers and Sisters, may we often feed upon this heavenly meat! 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.

THE NEW SONG ON EARTH
NO. 2424

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 4, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 17, 1887.

"He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."
Psalm 40:3.

THIS man who talks about his song and seems to be very much struck with the fact that he has become a singer, was formerly a man of prayer. I doubt not that he was still praying while he was praising, but he began to pray before he began to praise. It is not good to go in the choir, first—we must begin our spiritual experience at the "penitent form." He who sings without having wept may have to weep, by-and-by, where he can never sing!

Listen to what this man's experience had been—"I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." That is where God gets His singers—out of the place of praying and weeping! Where they learn to pray they begin to sing. Oh, yes, even in Heaven, itself, the sweetest voices that praise God and the Lamb belong to those who came out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Therefore are they before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His Temple. Do not try to get the joy of Christ without first having sorrow for sin—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

This man, who says that God has put a new song in his mouth, began with a new prayer in his *heart*—"I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

Further, this man, who sings so well that he cannot help talking about it, was once in a very deplorable state where there was no singing for him, but God brought him up out of it! Hear what he says, "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." Nowadays people do not seem to know much about that horrible pit. I wish they did. There are more gentle, quiet conversions—and I care little how men are converted so long as they are really converted—but, after all, the old-fashioned sort of conversions wear best. Men who know *from what* they are saved—men who have felt the iron rod of the Law and have been crushed and broken beneath the millstones of conviction—these are they who appreciate "Free Grace and dying love" to the fullest and speak of it, and sing of it! I do not find so much of this singing, now, and the reason is because there

has been so little of the deep experience of which our good old fathers used to speak.

The Psalmist says, "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 and, therefore, it is that this new song is in my mouth."—

"Firm on rock He made me stand,
And taught my cheerful tongue
To praise the wonders of His hand
In a new thankful song."

I. First, notice that we have HERE A MAN AMAZED TO FIND HIMSELF SINGING for the text is evidently a declaration that God had put a new song into his mouth and that it was a marvel, even to himself. Here is, then, a man amazed to find himself singing, and it would not be difficult to find one like he, here.

What makes you so amazed, my Friend? Other people sing—why is it at all amazing that *you* should? He answers, "It is amazing that I should sing *because I have been so used to sighing.* Had you seen me, Sir, when the arrows of God stuck fast in me, you would have heard many sighs, but never a song! If you had followed me home, you would have found my pillow wet with tears. But I was no nightingale, I could not sing in the dark. I woke in the morning almost sorry to think that I had to face the world, again, and that I had my burden still to bear! And I chanted no morning hymn and I went about the world still burdened till night came on again. Those around me talked of vesper hymns, but I had no such hymns. I had my evening moans and groans, for sin was heavy upon me, and an angry God seemed to make the darkness about me a darkness that might be felt! Had you seen me then, you would not think it strange that I should be amazed that I now sing!" Oh, yes, dear Hearers, if you have ever known the depths of sorrow for sin, you will be amazed to think that you can be as happy as you are because Christ has loosened the burden from your shoulder and made you free, saying, "Go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you."

Well, my Friend, I can see why you are astonished at your singing. Is there any other reason? "Yes," he answers, "if you had known me a little farther back, before I came under the hand of God and was awakened to a sense of sin, you would have known a fellow that could sing, but *the wonder, now, is that I can sing 'a new song.'* I am glad, Sir that you did not hear me sing in those days, for my songs would have done you no good. They were very light and trifling, sometimes lewd and sometimes profane. Oh, how I set my companions in a roar with my jests! And when I had a little drink in me, how I liked to thunder out some loose verses and bid the others take up the chorus! And 'jolly good fellows' were all of us said to be when those hymns of the devil were upon our tongues." Oh, you are *that* man, are you? Yet I heard you sing, just now, and I think you sang it from your heart—

"My heart is resting, O my God,
I will give thanks and sing!
My heart is at the secret Source
Of every precious thing!
And a 'new song' is in my mouth,

To long-loved music set!
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.
I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see.
The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me!"

Ah, now I am amazed, too, that such a man as you once were should be singing such a song as that! O Brothers and Sisters, there are some of us here who are amazed at ourselves when we think of what we used to be! Some of you forget the dunghills where you grew, but if you have any honesty in you, you cannot but feel the tear starting up between your eyelids at the recollection of how God has changed you. What a miracle of mercy you are! Surely it took almighty power to make a saint of such a sinner as you were! The utmost bound of infinite love must have been reached in the case of some who are in this House of Prayer praising redeeming love and wishing that they had a thousand tongues with which to shout the Savior's praise! Yes, Friend, I can see why it is that you are amazed that a new song is put into your mouth! The time past well suffices us to have sung the songs of Belial—now let us sing unto the Lord with all our strength, and tell all around what great things His Grace has done for us!

Still, my Friend, you who are so much amazed at yourself, you tell me that you marvel to find yourself singing because you so lately were sighing and, farther back, were singing such a different tune. Is there any other wonder in it? "Well, yes, Sir, my greatest wonder is because I am singing a new song. *It is a totally new song*—it is new to me, for I knew nothing of it, once. I ridiculed what I did not understand! I cast scorn on what I had not the candor to wish to know. I said that religion was all cant and that religious people were all hypocrites. I did not know this for a fact, but I said it, all the same. I did not want to know anything about Christ Crucified and the Gospel of His Grace. I said that these were only terms that were used by fanatical people and had no meaning in them. And as to the songs of Zion, why, Sir, I sometimes spoofed them to give a little zest to my profane merriment. But, as to singing them, myself, I felt that could never be the case."

Yes, Beloved, there are some who are now singing of Free Grace and dying love who, years ago, would not have believed it possible even if a Prophet of God had told them it would be so! They would have spat at any man who would have said, "And you, too, will take up the cross, and follow the Nazarene." Yet tonight they are singing a song altogether new to them! These low notes of penitence, the deep bass of confession are all new to them—and these highest notes, the jubilates that rise even to the skies—are all new to them. None of this score did they ever read in their days of sin! They never tuned their harps to such Psalms as this in the time of their unregeneracy. It is all new to you. Do I not remember when it was all new to *me*? Yet I heard it when I was a child. I was never away from the hearing of it, but when I came to know it, it was just as new to me, nursed on the lap of piety, as it was to you who lived in the midst of

a wicked world, for I was blind in the light as you were blind in the dark! I was deaf in the midst of music and you were only deaf in the midst of discord. There was but a slight difference between us, after all, and truly are we amazed to think that we should be singing a new song!

It is not only called a new song because it is new to us, but because it is so uncommon. Rich and rare things are often called new in the Bible. There is a New Covenant, there is a new Commandment. I will not quote the many things in Scripture that are called new because they are so rare. And, oh, the praises of God are, indeed, rich and rare! If an angel, fresh from Heaven, were asked his judgment of the various kinds of music played or sung below, I know what he would say. Your finest operas and your noblest lyrics concerning things of time and sense would be but doggerel in his ears and discord to his heart! But the hymns in which we praise our dying, yet risen Lord—the Psalms in which we exalt the God of Heaven and earth—these would be music, indeed, to him, and he would write these down as truly sweet! Yes, and so it is to us! Dull is the song that does not praise our Lord! But the burst of united Psalmody from a vast congregation that exalts Him brings tears to our eyes, as Augustine says it did to his—when he heard the singing at Milan. When first he entered the church, there, to hear the many simple folk praise God, touched his soul. But if it is not so—if the music is not to the praise of the Lord—there is no thing rich and rare in it for us. Oh, believe us, we have learned a rare song now that we have learned to praise the Lord our God!

And, truth to tell, there is a wonder about our new song because it is always new. Do you ever tire—you who love your Lord—do you ever tire of Him? You who praise Him, do you ever weary of singing His praises? You may very well weary of *me*, poor creature that I am—I who have addressed you so many hundreds of times—but you never weary of my subject when I talk of Jesus! You may very well weary of the monotony of any human voice, but you can never be tired of the many-stringed harp which is to be found in that one name, the name of Jesus! His name, fresh? Oh, I think it is newer to me, now, than when I first heard it! It may seem a paradox, but the Gospel is, to me, fresher, the longer I know it! Did not my heart leap at the sound of Christ's name nearly 40 years ago? Yes, but not as it does *now*! The music of His name will refresh our soul in death with a new depth of sweetness! It is all new as you go on in Jesus!

You seem, sometimes, to fancy that you are coming to an end, but there is no end to this music! Did you ever sail up or down the Rhine? If so, standing in the steamboat you thought you were in a lake rather than in a river—and you wondered how you could proceed any farther. You turned a corner and the river opened up before you with a fresh stretch of beauty and where it seemed to end, again, the end was all a delusion, for it still went on and on! So is it with the song which the Lord has taught us—it is always fresh and always new! We may make it say, as the poet made his brook to sing—

"Men may come, and men may go,
But I go on forever"

and so does the sweet melody of Jesus' precious name! It is a new song, a new song altogether!

Yet, again, if you wonder that we call it new, let me remind you that it is new because it seems to have awakened us into a newness of life. I have seen men excited—look at them whenever there is an election—but there is a far better kind of excitement than that which is produced by politics! When a man comes to know Christ and to love Him, it wakes him up from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet. We steady-going people, you know, try to be very serene and quiet, and our worship is apt to get terribly stiff and dull—but if we could let our souls have their liberty, if we could speak and sing as we feel—what a noise we would make sometimes! There would be hallelujahs and hosannas, indeed, and it is amazing that we can restrain them, for the Gospel of Christ somehow brings out of a man new faculties which he does not know of himself till a glorious breeze of Everlasting Life has blown through him! Then odors which otherwise had lain asleep, odors such as God delights in, are poured forth on every side! This is, indeed, a new song, for it makes us new! God grant, dear Friends, that many of you may so continually sing it that you may know what I mean—and a great deal more than I can say! That is a wonderful thing, then—a new man singing a new song!

There is yet a further wonder. My Friend, you have been telling us that you marvel that you have a new song. What is it that makes you so surprised? You have told us much—tell us a little more. And he answers, "Well, Sir, I wonder at my new song because it is raised unto our God—'even praise unto our God.'" It should not be, but still it is, a marvel when a man praises his God. We are by nature so averse to this sweet exercise that when we come to do it, and to do it heartily, it is a marvelous thing! Look. We praise God's Grace; we sing—

"Grace! 'Tis a charming sound!
Harmonious to the ear!"

And each saved man among us feels it to be so in his case. We praise God's power! What power He has put forth in bringing us up out of our graves of sin and turning us from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God by that same mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand. Yes, every man whom God has saved praises His Grace and His power.

The pith of the song is this—"praise unto our God." You cannot praise another man's God. At least there is no sweetness in such a song. But there is a blessed melody when it is "praise unto our God"—our Covenant God, the God who belongs to us, the God who by a perpetual Covenant has given Himself up to us to be our possession forever—"praise unto our God." I like to have it put in the plural. My soul can praise my God, but the highest note is reached when many of us, together, can praise "*our* God"—yours and mine! We who are Brothers and Sisters in Christ. We who know each other and love each other find a peculiar sweetness in our new song when it is "praise unto our God." If you all knew the sweetness of bringing others to Christ, more of you would live for it and be prepared to even die for it.

I have had some very happy days in my life, but my happiest times have been such as I had one day last week when I shook hands with somewhere about a hundred persons who called me their spiritual father. It seemed to them to be quite a grand day to touch my hand, while to me, the tears standing in my eyes as I saw each one of them—it was as the days of Heaven upon earth, for I had never seen all those people before! Perhaps some of them had been in this House of Prayer, now and then, but I did not know them. They had read the sermons and as I went from village to village, and found them standing at their doors, begging me to stop just to hear how such a sermon was "blessed to me," and, "my old father read your sermons and died in peace after reading them"—there, I could have died of joy, for this is the truest happiness we can have on earth! Seek sinners, my Brothers and Sisters, seek their conversion with all your heart and soul! If you would be happy men and women, and would sing the sweetest song that could be sung on earth, let it be, "praise unto our God"—not yours alone, but the God, also, of those whom Infinite Mercy shall permit you to bring to the same dear Savior's feet!

There is one more wonder about this song and then I shall have finished what I have to say about this friend of ours. You tell us that you sing and that you sing a new song—what is the greatest wonder about that song? "Why, Sir, to tell you the truth, I do not know which is the greatest marvel. There is a world of wonders in my singing this new song, but there is one point I have not told you, and that is this—'*He has put a new song in my mouth.*'" Oh, I see, then—you did not learn it from anybody? You did not make it up yourself? "No, no, no. A thousand times, no! It was God that put it into my mouth." Well now, when God puts a song into a man's mouth, that is a grand thing, for the devil, himself, cannot get it out! If God puts a new song into a man's mouth, he has a right to sing it and he *ought* to sing it—and he *must* sing it—therefore, let him sing it!

Magnify the Lord if He has done this great thing to you, if He has put this new song into your mouth! All that we ever do for ourselves never has the sweetness in it of that which God does for us. You may labor and toil and tug, and all the wage you get you may hold in the hollow of your hand—and it shall melt in the morning sun! But if God shall give it to you of His free, rich, Sovereign Grace, it shall be within you a well of water springing up into everlasting life! And neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come shall ever take it away from you! If God has put this new song in your mouth, that is the best thing you can tell us about it!

And so, my good Friend, I will ask you no more questions. Sing away, sing away, as long as ever you like! Sing praise unto our God—

"Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Would gladly stop the joyful song!
Sing and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue."

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, we have here, dear Friends, A MAN WHO IS RESOLVED TO KEEP ON SINGING, for, you notice, he says, "He

has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." So that this man means to keep on singing. I must have you back, again, old Friend, and ask you why it is that you mean to keep on singing?

He answers, first, "*Because I cannot help it.*" When God sets a man singing, he must sing! Good Rowland Hill once had, sitting on the pulpit stairs, a person who sang with such a cracked, squeaking voice that it put the dear man out of heart. And this person with the cracked voice, of course, sang more loudly than anybody else! So Mr. Hill said to him, while the hymn was being sung, "Be quiet, my good man. You make such a dreadful noise that you put us all out." "Oh," said the man, "I am singing from my heart, Mr. Hill!" "I beg your pardon, my Friend," said the preacher, "go on, go on, go on with your singing if it comes from your heart!"

So we would not stop any man, whatever his voice is, if he sings from his heart! But, what is more, we not only say that we would not stop him, but we *could not* stop him if we wanted to. If, as men say, "murder wills out," I am sure that Grace will! You cannot put salvation into a bottle and put the cork in! It will burst the bottle, for it must come out! If God has put a song into your mouth, you must sing it. Therefore, again I say, sing away!

But, my Friend over yonder, do not sing before everybody—perhaps it would be casting pearls before swine. "Oh," he says, "but I must! *I mean to sing before many.*" Why? "Well, I used to sing before many in my evil days. I was not ashamed to sing for the devil—when I ought to have been ashamed, I was not. And now that I ought not to be ashamed, I will not be ashamed and I will sing! Besides, why should I be so tender and considerate of their nerves? They are not thoughtful about mine." The ungodly sometimes complain of us for preaching outdoors. They say that it disturbs them. Bless their dear delicacy! What a noise they make at night, sometimes, when they keep us from sleeping while they noisily declare that they, "won't go home till morning"! Surely, we may sing as loudly as they do! And when we sing songs of Zion, we can well reply to them that when they are quiet, and will suspend their music, we may consider when we will suspend ours!

Still, my Friend, do you think that it is worth while to sing at this rate? "Yes," he says, "I do, for *I believe that it is good for them to hear it.*" Do you? What good can it do them? And he answers me thus. "Look at your text, Sir, and you will not need to ask me that question! What does your text say?" "Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." It is good to preach the Gospel, but it is better to preach and sing the Gospel! I mean, dear Friends, that if you and I, in our daily lives, were to sing the Gospel more—especially by a holy *cheerfulness of character*—we would bring the Truth of God home to a great many who now turn aside from it, and do not feel its power! Sing of Christ your Lord! Proclaim His love to you! Proclaim how you were converted! Tell how He brought you up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay—and as you do it, others will long to experience the same deliverance and so will be drawn to the

Savior by your sweet testimony to His Grace. There are many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar and there are many more sinners brought to Christ by the gracious tidings of His love than ever will be driven to Him by all the threats of His Law. I do not know a better soul-trap than a happy Christian experience! This will catch them—therefore be sure to use it. Sing, sing, sing unto the Lord a new song! Sing His praise unto the ends of the earth, for many will see it, and fear, and put their trust in the Lord!

If I had come here, tonight, knowing that there were persons here that were ailing, and were to say, "Now, listen. I will tell you how I suffered from your same illness," you would be sure to attend to me. And if I then mentioned a certain remedy, and said, "I took it and I have experienced a very remarkable cure," you would listen with both ears and you would ask, "Where is that remedy to be purchased?" You would begin thinking whether you could get some of it to-morrow morning, especially if you were very ill, yourselves, as I had been, and you would go away thankful to think that you had met with someone who, through his own experience, could guide you to a perfect cure!

Well now, that is exactly what I want you to do with regard to yourselves, you who are sick of sin, and care, and fear, and grief. I, too, as a youth, was sick of sin and I was made to feel it—and to endure great grief on account of it. I sought to be delivered from it. I gave up many things in which I had indulged and I hoped, by self-denial, that I would come to peace. But I did not, I was as far off as before I began! I said that I would very diligently attend the means of Grace and I did so. Thrice on the Sabbath I was found somewhere or other hearing the Word of God. But mere sermon-hearing brings no peace. Then I said that I would read good books. How I remember reading *Alleine's Alarm* and Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, and Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted.* And how they plowed me, and brought tears into my eyes—but I found no rest to my soul by all the godly books I read—the best that could be read. Whatever was proposed to me that looked likely to bring me rest, I was eager to try. I was willing, I am sure, to become a monk, or anything else beneath the sun that would promise peace to my spirit, for I wanted to be right and longed to be at peace with God.

At last, I found rest. The preacher pictured Christ upon the Cross, bleeding for sinners. And he said, in his Lord's own words, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." And I looked! It was all I could do—it was all I was asked to do—I looked! It was but a look, yet in that moment all my fears were ended, my doubts were solved, my burden was removed, and I, too, could say, "He has put a new song in my mouth. He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings."

Now, after trying and testing this salvation for a good many years—well near on to forty—I have only this to say of it. It is a simple salvation, but it is as sound as it is simple! It is fitted for the poorest of us, but it is as enriching as it is suitable to our poverty! The weakest may look to Jesus, but by looking he shall soon be ranked among the strongest! He who

is at death's door may look to Jesus Crucified, but the life that look brings is life everlasting which shall never die! There is the remedy and I have tried it! That is all I can say to you except that I beg you to try it yourselves. Try it yourselves! Look to Christ. Look to Christ! Trust Jesus, that is all—trust, simply trust! It seems as if this could not be all, but it is. You with the broken heart, trust! You with the heart that will not break, trust to have it broken! You that are deeply penitent, trust—not in your repentance, however—but in Christ! And you that can not repent, but wish to repent, look to Christ for repentance!

Trust! Trust! Trust as the drowning man trusts to the life buoy, as the shipwrecked mariners trust to the lifeboat. Trust! Trust in God Almighty, Incarnate in the bleeding Man of Sorrows, for it is God that hangs on the Cross in the body of the Nazarene. Trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary—and as surely as He lives, as surely as God lives, you shall live and live forever! Heaven and earth may pass away, but that Word shall never pass away, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." May you have it tonight! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 33; 1 JOHN 1.

Verse 1. *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, for praise is comely for the upright.* False gods were worshipped with dolorous sounds, accompanied by cutting with knives and with lances, but our God is the happy God and He would have His people happy. "Rejoice in Jehovah, O you righteous." The praises of God are very beautiful when they are sung by holy people, "for praise is comely for the upright." But the praises of God on the lips of godless men are altogether out of place. I wonder how Christians can allow those to lead their praises in the sanctuary who never can, from their hearts, praise God? They who sing to the worldling all the week should not be employed to sing to the God of the holy on the Sabbath! Surely, "Praise is comely for the upright." Hymns and Psalms sung by the ungodly are but as sweet spices laid upon a dunghill—but—"praise is comely for the upright."

2, 3. *Praise the LORD with harps: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.* Under a dispensation of types and shadows, the use of musical instruments seemed to be necessary and suitable, but in the early Christian Church, in her purest ages, these things were discarded as tending towards Judaism. And at this day, the sweetest singing in the world is heard in the assembly which utterly renounces the use of every musical instrument! Yet I believe that there is Christian liberty about these things and, for my part, I like to think of Luther with his lute and of George Herbert with his harp. If they were helped to praise God the better, let them have the music! Yet the singing is never sweeter than when it is all song—and there is no better music than that which comes from hearts and tongues that are alive—and that know what sounds they make and why they make them. Anyhow, let us sing unto Jehovah! Hang

not your harps on the willows, suspend not your music! Praise God somehow, praise Him anyway, but praise Him!

4. *For the Word of the LORD is right.* Praise Him for His Word, then. It is truth, it is righteousness. If we had nothing else but the Bible for which to praise God, there would be reason enough for giving Him endless praise for bestowing upon us such a priceless treasure!

4. *And all His works are done in truth.* Praise Him for His Providence. There is never a mistake in what He does—"All His works are done in truth."

5. *He loves righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.* Therefore praise Him. So good a God should not be without your gratitude.

6. *By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.* Praise your Creator, then, the Maker of the universe!

7-9. *He gathers the waters of the sea together as an heap: He lays up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.* These are simple but grand words! The work of creation was very wonderful and it was all worked by the Word of the Lord. There were no angelic agencies. "He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast."

10. *The LORD brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing.* They plot and they contrive, but He baffles them! Men may think and scheme as they will, but God has His way, after all!

10, 11. *He makes the devices of the people of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.* His decrees stand fast. Jehovah still reigns and still He must reign forever and ever.

12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.* There is the reason why they are blessed—it is all owing to God's electing love! "The people whom He has chosen." If God has chosen them, they are blessed people, indeed! Whom He determines to bless none can effectually curse.

13. *The LORD looks from Heaven; He beholds all the sons of men.* As we look out of a window and see the people passing in the street below, "He beholds all the sons of men," whether at the pole or at the equator! None are hidden from His Omniscient eyes.

14, 13. *From the place of His habitation He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts alike.* Not that their hearts *are* alike, but it means that He only fashions all their hearts—they were all made by Him. There is no understanding so great but He made it and there is no mind so feeble but still He made it—

"He fashions their hearts."

13, 16. *He considers all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* See what vast companies of soldiers Darius gathered together, yet Alexander smote them—and Napoleon led into Russia more than half a million of men, yet they melted away like snow!

16. *A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.* Sooner or later, he dies, however strong he is.

17. *A horse is a vain thing for safety.* It throws its rider, or falls upon him, or is killed with him.

17, 18. *Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.* Beautiful expression! I always like that mixture of fear and hope. An old fisherman used to compare it to his net. "Fear," he said, "is the weight that sinks it, and hope is the cork that floats it." To make a perfect character, there must he both fear and hope! The man that never fears may begin to fear, but he that is all fear is a miserable creature. God help him to begin to hope!

19. *To deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.* When others die of want, the Lord will take care of them that fear Him. I remember a story of the siege of Rochelle, when the city was in such straits that the people had to eat cats, dogs, rats and all manner of filthiness. There was one Christian woman, who, having some stores, fed the poor therewith, whereat her friends said she was a fool, for she would soon be starving. They asked, "Who is to take care of you when all is gone?" She answered, "The Lord will provide for me." At last her stores were exhausted. She went to beg from her friends, but they refused her. She was nearly famished when, strange to tell (as we put it), someone, unknown to her, shot down a sack full of wheat at her door! She never knew who it was, and then she said to her friends, "God has provided for me," and, while others died, she lived, for she had practiced holy charity. She had feared God and given to her neighbors—she had not selfishly hoarded what she had—and the Lord rewarded her. Let me read these two verses again. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine."

20. *Our soul waits for the LORD: He is our help and our shield.* Notice the three, "ours." Personal possession is the very soul of piety—all else is mere verbiage. Not, "What do you hear?" but, "What do you have?" Not, "What do you talk about?" but, "What do you possess?" That is the thing—"Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield."

21. *For our heart shall rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name.* If you do but trust in His holy name, you shall, one day, rejoice in Him. Trust Him in the dark and you shall see the Light of God! Trust Him in famine and you shall surely be fed.

22. *Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in You.* Let us each one pray that prayer now—"Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You." Amen. Now turn to the First Chapter of the First Epistle of John, that you may see what an Apostle had to say concerning joy.

1 John 1:1. *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.* You know who that is, who it is

that John had heard, seen, looked upon and handled even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!

2, 3. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us), that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.* The Father delights in His risen Son, no more to suffer and to die, having accomplished all His work. And I am sure that we have fellowship with the Father in that rejoicing! Then think what is the joy of Christ, who has passed through the shades of death, and risen from all the gloom of the sepulcher no more to die! I trust, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that we have fellowship with Him, for we, also, have risen with Him unto newness of life!

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* "There," the Apostle seems to say, "if you have doubts, they will kill your joy. Doubt is a great joy-killer, but we have seen Him, we have heard Him, we have handled Him who is the Fountain of all true joy! Let no doubts come into your hearts, for these are well-attested facts of which we speak. "We live still," says John—though, perhaps, when he wrote, he may have been the last survivor of the eleven—"we live still, by our testimony concerning Christ, to confirm your faith, that your joy may be full."

5-7. *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not say the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* That is, if we walk in the brightest light we can ever know, and if our fellowship with God is the highest that can be enjoyed this side Heaven, we shall *still need the cleansing blood of Jesus* and, blessed be God, we shall still have it and we shall still find that it "cleanses us from all sin!"

8. *If we say that we have no sin., we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* We are walking in darkness when we thus talk of light. It is easy for a blind man to talk of light though he cannot see it and there are some who boast of very superior light who, nevertheless, are so much in the dark that they cannot even see their own sin.

9, 10. *If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.* The Lord bless to us the reading of his Word! 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.

SELF-DESTROYED, YET SAVED
NO. 2425

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 11, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 11, 1887.

"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help."
Hosea 13:9.

IT would be a very important subject for our meditation if we kept to the text and thought upon its great Truth of God—that the ruin of man is altogether of himself and the salvation of man is altogether of God. These two statements, I believe, comprehend the main points of a sound theology. There have been divisions in the Church over these points where there ought not to have been any. The Calvinist has said and said right bravely, that salvation is of Grace alone. And the Arminian has said and said most truthfully, that damnation is of man's will, alone, and as the result of man's sin, and of that only. Then they have fallen out with one another. The fact is, they had, each one, laid hold of a Truth of God, and if they could have put their heads together and accepted both Truths, it might have been greatly for the advantage of the Church of Christ! These two doctrines are like tram lines that you can travel on with safety and comfort, these parallel lines—ruin, of man; restoration, of God. Sin, of man's will; salvation, of God's will. Reprobation, of man's demerit; election, of God's free and Sovereign Grace. The sinner lost in Hell through himself, alone, the saint lifted up to Heaven wholly and alone by the power and Grace of God!

Get those two Truths of God thoroughly engraved upon your heart and you will then hold comprehensively the great Truths of Scripture. You will not need to crowd them into one narrow system of theology, but you will have a sort of duplicate system which will contain, as far as the mind of man, being finite, can contain—the great Truths revealed by the Infinite God. I am not, however, at this time going so much into the doctrinal point as to try and make use of my text for practical soul-saving purposes.

You notice in this text, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself," how God comes to close terms with men. He speaks, calling the persons addressed by name, "O Israel," and then He uses a singular pronoun, "you have destroyed yourself." It is something like Nelson's way of fighting. When he came alongside the enemy, he brought his ship as close as he could, and then sent in a devastating broadside from stem to stern! So does this text—it seems to get alongside of the man, puts its guns right close up to him, and then discharges its volley—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

There is nothing said here that is at all flattering—"you have destroyed yourself." God bids a man look at himself as a blighted, blasted, ruined thing when He tells him that he is a self-destroyer! He has done it all! He has no need to ask, as Jesus did, "Who slew all these?" Your own red right hand has done it! O you guilty sinner, you have ruined yourself! See how plainly God speaks, how He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and with His storm of hail sweeps away all refuges of lies—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

But though He does not flatter, observe that the Lord does not conclude His address to the sinner by leaving him in despair, for the second part of the text is, "In Me is your help." We should never so preach the Law as to show only the naked sword of Divine Justice—the sweet invitations and promises of the Gospel must come in after the dreadful verdict of judgement! Let the thunders roll, let the lightning set the heavens on fire, but conclude not till some silver drops have fallen and a shower of mercy has refreshed the thirsty earth! No, God will not have us preach only the Law and its terrors, but the Gospel must also be brought into our message—"You have destroyed yourself, O Israel: there is no concealing from you that grim and terrible fact. But in Me is your help: there is no keeping back from you that cheering and blessed information!" When these two things work together, breeding self-despair and hope in God, this is the way by which eternal life is worked in the souls of men!

I am going to speak, then, of those two themes and first, here is *a sad fact*—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." Secondly, here is *a hopeful assurance*—"In Me is your help." And, before I finish, I wish to notice, in the third place, *an instructive warning* which is given by this text as you read it in the Revised Version—"It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your Help." It is a warning to men not to fight against their own salvation, or contend against the only Helper who can aid them to any purpose!

I. First, then, here is A SAD FACT—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

Now, dear Friends, I believe that there is a message here to every one of us. The text speaks in tones of thunder to each *unconverted person* and says, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." But if any child of God has lost his first love, his joy, his comfort—if he has become a *backslider*—if he has fallen into a sad, melancholy condition, he has done it himself and the text tells him so! "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." If there is about any of us that which we have to mourn over by reason of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, the text puts its finger on the sore, and says, "you have destroyed yourself! You have, yourself, done all this mischief."

But, addressing myself mainly to those who do not as yet know the Lord, I want you, dear Friends, to notice that *this sad fact stared Israel in the face*—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." He could see it, he could feel it, he could not escape from knowing it, for this was the singular fact—that God Himself seemed to have turned against him. I read you, just now, those seventh and eighth verses where God says, "I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will

meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will tear open their rib cage, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them."

It happens to some men, as it has happened to many who have come under my observation, that they have gone on pleasantly in sin for a time, till, all of a sudden, the hand of God has gone out against them. They have been smitten with sickness—those same strong young fellows who never had any sickness and who thought that they could indulge their passions to the utmost without fear—have been, all of a sudden, laid low. Perhaps the hand of God has gone out against them in business. They were prospering. They added field to field. They could afford to spend money freely in various ways, but, by-and-by, the stream of business began to run low and then to dry up altogether! What they attempted did not prosper however hard they labored. They rose up early, they sat up late, they ate the bread of carefulness—but all went amiss with them. Whatever they did seemed to have a blight upon it. Truly, God met them as a lion and as a bear bereaved of her whelps!

At such a time as this, the man begins to see that there must be something wrong with him. He did not know it, before—perhaps he even thought that his prosperity was a proof that God was not angry with him! And he went on from sin to sin and said within himself, "Why, I do not suffer even as Christian people do! Surely, I must be right, after all, for I increase in riches and my eyes stand out with fatness." Oh, if you are one of God's chosen, there will come to you a day of darkness in which you shall not see your way along the road of sin! God will hedge up your path with thorns and dig deep ditches in your way—and you shall stumble and fall—and then shall you say, "I perceive that something is amiss with me. I see that I am on the wrong track. Oh, how shall I escape, how shall I get onto the right road?"

I say, again, when a man is in that condition, as Israel was in my text, then his sad state stares him in the face! You cannot convince the worldling that he is in an evil case when he is living without God and yet prospering! Oh, no—he is satisfied as long as he gets the things of this world—what cares he for the world to come? Therefore, one of the first means that God uses to awaken men from the dangerous slumber of their natural estate is to go to war with them and to be like one who is cruel to them—that He may tear them away from themselves and from their follies.

Notice, next, that while this grief stared them in the face, it was attributed to themselves, *it lay at their own door*—"O Israel, *you* have destroyed yourself." There is always hope for a man when he knows this and confesses this. The worst of it is that, by nature, we lay our ruin at anybody's door but our own! "It was all the fault of our family environment—how can we help it? It was God's purpose, or it was the devil's temptation." We put the saddle anywhere but on the right horse! We will not accept this great and certain Truth, "O Israel, you have destroyed *yourself*." Now, you can be sure of this, O Man, that the sin which will ruin you is your own sin! That for which you will suffer, that for which you *do* suffer is the sin which you, yourself, have committed—the evil

which you have willfully committed! There are some to whom this Truth of God has a special reference. Let me see whether I can identify them.

There are some of us who went into sin without any previous training whatever! Some of us were born of Christian parents and our earliest days were spent in a holy circle. We heard no evil language, we saw no evil example, we cannot remember anything that was wrong that crossed our path as children. Yet we went astray from childhood unto youth, pursuing evil as eagerly as did the children of the vicious! Wherever this is the case, does not the text come home with great sharpness, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself"? You cannot say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." You have eaten the sour grapes, yourselves, and set your own teeth on edge! Perhaps some, here, are the children of Christian ministers and they know where they spent last night—I do not. Perhaps some, here, were borne and trained by mothers whose purity was most exemplary—but they, themselves, though they never had an evil example, have plunged into sin as naturally as the young crocodile takes to the Nile! This is, with an emphasis, for a man to destroy himself!

So there are some who are not the victims of temptation, but they have deliberately gone into sin. I feel great pity for some that, from their peculiar constitution, seem as if their very flesh led their soul into mischief—from their birth they appeared to have a tendency towards such and such evils. We do not excuse these guilty ones, but, at the same time, are they as blameworthy as others who, without any particular pressure from outside or from within, nevertheless deliberately sin? Oh, my dear Friends, if you can sit down and look at sin coolly, and calculate and turn it over, and then, after weighing it in the scales, can go after it, then I must say, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." Yours was wanton, deliberate mischief! Who shall justify you before the bar of God at the great Judgment Day?

There are some who have to take a great deal of plotting and planning in order to be able to manage to sin at all. Their surroundings are such that they seem to be shielded and guarded against iniquities which are natural enough to others. They have to dodge the inspection of the household. They have to practice as many tricks to escape the eyes of wife or daughter as the burglar does when he tries to break into the house at night. Now, what shall I say of such who put all their wits to work to damn their souls—and are far more busy to ruin themselves than the greatest schemers and merchants are for a fortune? Yet there are many such and of these we have to say emphatically, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

Yes, and I have even seen them act thus against warnings given them with tears, warnings which have brought tears to their own eyes! They have pushed through the most loving obstacles downward to the Pit as if resolved to perish! And they have sinned against enlightenment, for Mr. Conscience has flashed his bull's-eye lantern in their eyes. They have stood, for a time, astonished at themselves, and have felt that they could not sin thus, yet they have soon said that they would—and they have pushed good Mr. Conscience to one side—and still pursued the down-

ward track. Oh, this is terrible! When a man acts thus, we must say of him, "you have destroyed yourself."

Some will act thus distinctly against Providence. When God has stepped in their path and blocked them out of one sin, they have edged about, and gone to another! And when they could not effect their purpose. When it seemed as if the very earth and the stars in their courses would fight against them in their pursuit of sin, they have selected another road as if to baffle the God of mercy and destroy themselves whether He would let them do so or not! I am giving a terrible description, but I am painting sinners exactly as they are—I know I am! There are some here who will recognize their own portraits if they have any eyes left—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

Further, notice that in the text, *God, Himself, reminds the sinner of this sad fact!* Ought he not to have known it without being told of it? Yes, he should. Might he not have discovered it by listening to the Prophets who would have told him so? Assuredly he should! But God, Himself, breaks through all reserve and comes to this guilty sinner—and says to him, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself. See what has come of your iniquity? Did I not tell you it would be so? Look, and see for yourself." It is not a man like yourself who tells you that it is so, but *God* who knows! God who never exaggerates! He tells you that you have destroyed yourself!

O my dear Hearer, it may be that while I am speaking to you in truth and soberness about this weighty matter, God, Himself, is speaking through my lips! Indeed, it is so! It is the Lord who says to you, "you have destroyed yourself; you have destroyed your innocence, you have destroyed your righteousness, you have destroyed your tenderness, you have well-near destroyed your conscience, you have destroyed your hopes, you have destroyed your best years, you have destroyed your usefulness, and now you have brought yourself to death's dark door—

"'Buried in sorrow and in sin."

God Himself can say no less than this to you, "you have destroyed yourself." God who loves men. God the tender-hearted and the generous. God who says, "How can I give you up?" Even He is forced to give this solemn verdict, "O Israel, you have not only hurt yourself, and wounded yourself, but you have damned yourself, you have destroyed yourself, you have ruined yourself! Your last hope is put out, like the last flicker of the candle, and you are left in the dark."

It may be that some here will *confess the truth of this fact*. If so, bow your heads—solemnly bow before the living God and acknowledge that it is so, "Yes, I have destroyed myself." It will be a bitter, bitter moment, and yet it will be the best moment you have ever lived, in which you sob out this confession, "O God, I have destroyed myself!" How I wish that I could make men act thus, but I cannot. We try to preach the Truth of God with all the earnestness we possess, but we cannot get the Truth into our hearer's soul! On such a sultry night as this, you sit and listen to me with as much attention as you can in the closeness of the atmosphere, but O ungodly one, if this Truth of God really entered your heart, I question whether you would be able to keep your seat! It would fill you with an inward anguish and you would be ready to cry aloud, "What

shall I do, what shall I do, for I have ruined myself?" If you could see the pit that yawns for you. If you saw the chasm that is just before you—your foot is even now well-near over a bottomless gulf, yet you do not perceive it—if you did perceive it, it would be another matter for me to preach, and for you to hear this message, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!"

II. I am very happy to be permitted by my text to now change my strain, praying that what has been already said may have its due effect and prepare the way for this more pleasing note. Here is, secondly, A HOPEFUL ASSURANCE—"But in Me is your help."

Notice that *this assurance came at a very fit time*. Just when the man was made to know that he had destroyed himself, *then* it was that God said to him, "But in Me is your help." What is the use of a Savior when you do not need saving? The point is to have a Savior when you are lost! And this is the glory of Christ, that He is a timely Redeemer who does not redeem those who are not slaves, but ransoms us when we are sold under sin! You will never know the Gospel till you have known the Law. If you have not felt the crushing power of the first sentence of my text, "you have destroyed yourself," you will not care for the cheering note that makes up the second sentence, "In Me is your help." Remember that when you have sinned—it is *then* that Christ washes you from sin. When you are lost, it is *then* that Christ saves you and if you are now full of sin, it is *now* that Christ can begin to bless you! If you now feel so leprous that there is not a sound spot in you, it is *now* that Christ can come and heal you!

"Oh!" you say, "if I did not feel as I now do, I think that Christ could heal me." He can heal you as you now feel, or as you do not feel—for if you are in such a condition that you *do not even feel*, but are brought to acknowledge that death has seized you, and seems to have petrified your very heart—yet where you are, and as you are, Christ is an all-sufficient Savior for you! If you have gone down seven pairs of stairs into the dungeon where the light never comes, yet Jesus can come to you, even there, and set you free at once! I do not know where to pick words strong enough to make this Truth of God quite plain and emphatic—*it is not your goodness that makes you fit for Christ*—it is your *badness* in which Christ shall be glorified by delivering you from it! The need may never be so great, but Christ can meet it! The distress may be never so urgent, but Christ can come and remove it! So, then, this assurance was hopeful because it came at a fit time. When Israel was destroyed, then God was his help!

Notice, next, that *it came as a contrast to their condition*—"you have destroyed yourself." Yes, yes, "but—but in Me is your help." "You have destroyed yourself. You can not save yourself. You have destroyed yourself, that is true, but then I have come, not to destroy you—not to do the work which you have done—you have done that effectually enough. There is no need for Me to come in and do more destroying. I have come to *undo* the work that you have done. I have come to give you a better righteousness than the one you have lost. I have come to give you a tenderness of heart far better than any you had by nature. I am come to give

you a new heart and a right spirit. I am come to work in you, again, all that you have destroyed! Yes, and to work in you something *better* than you have destroyed—to make you a new man in Christ Jesus. In Me is your help." What a contrast is this to the condition of the one who has destroyed himself!

Observe, also, that *this assurance comes from God, Himself*—"In Me is your help." O Soul, I wish that I could make you turn your eyes, once and for all, away from yourself and all that comes of yourself, for you will never get help there! I would have you look to God, to God in Christ Jesus, to God the Holy Spirit, to God the Divine Father—for if ever there is help for such an one as you are, that help must be in God! As an old friend said to me yesterday, "Nothing will do for you and me but Grace." I said to him, "Yes, and that won't do unless it is the Grace of God." It must be God's own Grace, redeeming us from all iniquity and working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, or else we can never be saved! But then God tells us that we *can* be saved, for though He says that we have destroyed ourselves, He adds, "But in Me is your help."

Sitting in the pew, over yonder, is one who says, "Oh, but I am full of the most accursed sin!" I know that you are, but God is full of the most blessed mercy and in Him is your help! "Oh, but I am all failure, and shortcoming, and unrighteousness!" Yes, but God is all righteousness, and Grace, and faithfulness—and *there* is where your hope lies! "Oh, but I am powerless! I can do nothing!" I know that and I would have you know it—but the Lord is almighty and He can do everything! Cast yourself upon Him! This is faith—to go out of yourself to God, to get away from all this hampering mass of rottenness, this ruin, this destruction, the fallen manhood of the flesh and the self-confidence that grows like a fungus out of it—and come to the eternal God who is pure holiness—and rest in Him as He reveals Himself in the Person of His dear Son!

"I know," says one, "that there is help in God." You know something, but you do not yet know *everything*, for the text says, "In Me is *your* help." Not only for Mary and for Thomas, but help for *you*. "In Me is *your* help." "Surely," exclaims one, "it does not mean *me*, for I am a destroyed one." I tell you that it means *exactly* you, for this help is for the destroyed one—"You have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help." "Possibly there may be help for So-and-So, who has a good natural disposition and has never gone astray as I have gone." That may be. I do not know anything about him, but I have to deal with one, now, who has no good natural disposition and nothing whatever to recommend him. I have to deal with *you*, you destroyed one, you who are like an old ruin, broken and cast down, inhabited by moles and bats, a foul and filthy thing! You stand in the darkness, there, and it is Christ who comes to rebuild such as you are and make a Temple for Himself out of even *you*! I see you black and foul, not worthy to be picked off a dunghill, and it is such as *you* are that the splendor of Almighty Love has chosen, that in *you*, in all your rottenness and abomination, the glory of His Grace may be manifested by making something out of you though you are nothing—making a glorious righteousness to cover you though you are naked—and your very righteousnesses are but as filthy rags!

"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." Bury him! Bury the dead out of our sight! Cast him into the pit! "No," says Mercy, "stop that dreadful procession! Let the bearers stand still. Christ comes to this dead young man and He says, 'you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.'" Look, the dead man lives! I see him sit upright! He is delivered to his mother and God is glorified in the resurrection of the dead. "You have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help."

What do you say, Sinner? Will you have this help? "Have it?" you ask. "Have it? Yes, but I am not worthy." Now, away with that nonsense! Have I not told you that the Lord comes to bless you not because of you worthiness, but because of His Grace? "What am I to do to have it?" You have nothing to *do* but *take* it! He freely gives it to you! "But surely there is something expected of me." You are a fool if you expect anything of yourself but sin! All your expectation of good must be from God! You may expect great things of God, and then there will be great things worked in you, but what you have to do *now* is just to accept the infinite mercy of God and submit to Him as the clay on the wheel yields to the hand of the potter, that He may mold and fashion you, and make you to be a vessel of mercy fitted for His use.

God bless these words of mine to the salvation of some of you! I travail in birth for you till Christ is formed in you. I remember times when, if I had heard such an assuring word as this, when I was burdened with guilt and full of fears, I think I would have leaped forward to lay hold upon it! And if there are any such here, this message should be as though a rift were made in the clouds to let them see into Heaven. "In Me is your help," says Christ on yonder eternal Throne! "In Me is your help," says the Father in the splendor of His Glory! "In Me is your help," says the Spirit who, like a dove, is hovering here, waiting to enter into some heart and work His gracious will!

III. I close with what I mentioned to you, the rendering of the Revised Version, which has much to be said in its favor. This gives us AN INSTRUCTIVE WARNING—"It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help."

Dear Friends, do not any of you fight against your only true Helper? Is not this a dreadful thing for anyone to do? We sometimes say of a man, "Now, you are standing in your own light. You know that it is only yourself that is hindering yourself." We say this to the drunk who is earning good wages, and yet spending so much of his money in poisoning himself. We say to him, "You cannot keep on like this. You are ruining your health, you are robbing your family, you cannot prosper while you act thus, you are standing in your own light." It is a very sad thing when this is the fact concerning a man's *temporal* prosperity, but what shall I say of a man when he is his own *soul's* destroyer, when he stands in the way of his own joy and peace through believing?

Let me close by beseeching you not to stand in your own light, any of you, or to act in antagonism to your only Helper. "How can we do that?" says one. Well, first, *by disbelieving the Gospel*. I have seen some do this very foolishly. I heard one say, the other day, "Well now, that is a very precious Gospel. I think, somehow, that I could believe it if it were not so

good as it is, but it seems too good to be true!" Well, if you keep on with that kind of talk, you will be very foolish, you will be standing in your own light! Suppose somebody were to come to your house and say to you, "You know such a mansion." "Yes." "You know that it has a beautiful park around it." "Yes." "Well, I have brought you the title-deeds of that estate. I am going to make you a present of it."

Perhaps you would smile and say, "There are a great many practical jokes being played nowadays, and I suppose this is one of them." But suppose that this person said, "No, this is a reality, it is no joke, it is a fact. Here are the title-deeds of this estate made out in your name." Suppose that, month after month, you said, "It is too good to be true"? You would be very unwise. I think that if it were said to me, I would go and see, for I would say, "There are so many strange things that happen, nowadays, that one begins to expect the unexpected and, at any rate, I would sooner be made a fool of by being led to believe something more than is true, than I would make a fool of myself by not believing what is really true!"

If you were shut up in a prison, condemned to die tomorrow morning, and expected that at eight o'clock you would be hanged by the neck till you were dead—if someone stood at the prison door and said to you, "Here is a free pardon for you," I can imagine your saying, "Don't tantalize me. It is too good to be true!" But if you actually went out to be hanged, refusing the pardon because you thought that it was too good to be true—well, I do not know what I would say of you. The Gospel *cannot* be too good to be true! Whatever God says must be grandly good! It must be divinely, infinitely good! Do you believe it? Do not quarrel with God's mercy because it is so great! Little mercy could not serve your turn. Therefore, do not cry out against it because it is so great, but come and accept it cheerfully, and say, "God be thanked for it! I will gladly receive this great favor which He so freely presents to me."

Then, do not fight against God *by trifling with His mercy.* How often are persons impressed and awakened, yet they go straight into some silly or even wicked company! It is a terrible thing for some people that on the Sabbath they are often rendered serious by what they hear, and then on the weekday they go into amusements which distract them from better things and lead them on to evil things. And so the good Word of God is forgotten. Their goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew. What have any of you to do with mirth while you are unsaved? What have you to do with sightseeing till you have seen your Savior? There is not a moment you ought to waste, not an hour that you can spare, till you have found Christ and are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

Lastly, I pray you, do not fight against your best Friend, or contend against your only Helper *by hardening your hearts.* Ask to have them softened. Better still, whether hardened or softened, obey that blessed Gospel precept, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Remember how He, Himself, puts the matter, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Or as Paul put it, "If you shall confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has

raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart, man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." Obey the heavenly message! Pause not, hesitate not, but hasten to obey the voice of Christ! And when this is done, then you shall find that despite your self-destruction, help enough was laid up in God even for you—and you shall sing forever to the praise of His Free and Sovereign Grace.

The Lord bless you, and this simple testimony of mine, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *HOSEA 13:1-14.*

Verse 1. *When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.* When we are little in our own esteem. When we are full of fears concerning ourselves. When we dare not think of boasting, then it is that we grow! "When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel."

1. *But when he offended in Baal, he died.* It is when, like Ephraim, we turn aside to other gods, when our heart goes astray from the Lord, that there is death—death to our joys, death to our confidence, death to our usefulness. No one knows what destruction there is, even in the least sin, to the most joyful Believer. It is like the hot breath of the Sirocco which scorches up every green thing. If, before this terrible blast, everything is like Eden, behind it all is as a desert. Let us read the whole verse again that we may lay to heart the lesson it teaches us. "When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."

2. *And now they sin more and more.* That is the usual way of sin—it is a growing evil—its course is downhill.

2. *And have made there molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.* Their idolatry was such that they were not satisfied with the bulls that were set on high as images, but they had little imitations of these which they wore upon their persons, just as Romanists wear small crucifixes or crosses. These they carried about with them for their own private worship. Oh, what a tendency there is in sin to multiply itself! The idolaters were not satisfied with bowing the knee to false gods, but they said, "Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." Superstition goes from one evil to another—there is no end to it! You may begin with what you call moderate Ritualism, but where you will end I cannot tell. Some go beyond the superstitions of Popery, itself! The only safe way is to worship the Lord our God and serve Him, alone, and purge out the idols from among us.

3. *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.* If they make idols their gods, they shall be like their idols! Idols are but for a day—what is there in them of endurance? What is there in them of power? "They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusts in them." If we trust

in anything that we can *see*. If we trust in anything but God, then our hope shall be "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away," and we, ourselves, shall be like the chaff that is driven from the threshing floor by a whirlwind, or like the smoke driven out of the chimney by the blast!

4. *Yet I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but Me: for there is no Savior beside Me.* Now here is the wickedness of idolatry—that we have so good a God and yet must look after another! Here is the sin of trusting to an arm of flesh—that we have an almighty arm to lean upon and instead of doing so, we begin to look to a poor arm that has not strength enough to support itself, much less to support us! Are any of you children of God forgetting your God? Is your faith turning away from the great Invisible and the sure promises of His Word? Are you looking to the *creature*? Beware of it, I pray you! Whenever you do that, you are making a rod for your own back! If you forsake the Lord, to whom will you go?

5. *I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.* Look back upon days of your trouble, when God was very near to you. Do you not remember when He was everything to you? When you were poor, when you were sick, when you were despised, God knew you, then, yet now you sing—

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"

6. *According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.* What a terrible verse this is! After they had been filled, they turned away from the God that filled them! When they were poor and despised, then He was all to them! But afterwards, when, by His Providence, they grew rich and increased in goods, *then they forgot their God*. I have often seen it thus. It is a grievous evil under the sun. I have seen the man rejoicing in God, earnest and devout while he has been afflicted and poor. God has prospered him and then he has turned his back upon sacred things and made the *world* his joy. Is not this a horrible sin, a gross evil? I well remember one who used to steal into this House of Prayer on Thursday nights, glad to escape, a while, from the persecution in his own home. He had a hard time of it to be a Christian at all, but he came to be the possessor of his father's estates and he has now no care for these things! He is a fashionable gentleman, now—he who once was glad enough to mix with even the poorest of God's people and to find comfort among them! It is a sad thing when it is so and when the Lord has to say to any, "I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me."

7, 8. *Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and I will tear open their rib cage, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.* For God is jealous and most jealous of those whom He loves best! He cannot endure that we should treat Him thus—He means to have our love by some means—and if He cannot have it by gentleness, He will have it by sterner methods. If the

Lord has chosen you, He will sooner be to you as a leopard and a lion than He will suffer you to live without Him. You must, you shall find your all in Him!

9, 10. *O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help. I will be your King.* If you have shifted Me from the Throne and set up an usurper, I will come and be your King even now.

10. *Where is any other that may save you in all your cities?* To whom else can you look? Where else can you find peace?

10. *And your judges of whom you said, Give me a king and princes?* What is the good of them? Have they not all turned out to be a delusion?

11, 12. *I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.* How sadly true this is! Sin seems to be bound up in our very nature. It is hard to find it—it is hidden away and when we discover some of it, and it is purged away—there is still more to be found! As hidden treasure may lie in a house for many a day and not be seen, so are there stores of corruption that seem hidden away in our nature, and are not easily discovered. What a gracious God we have to deal with, or else He would have swept us away long ago!

13, 14. *The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave.* Oh, what great promises we get driven, like piles, into the marshes of our sin to make a foundation for God's Grace! Here, when the Lord says that we have destroyed ourselves and He notes all the blackness of our depravity, then He comes in with this gracious word, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." You who believe in Jesus shall not die! No, not even the deadly force of sin shall hold you in your grave! There is a resurrection for the dead. There is a spiritual resurrection for you, Believers! When you mourn your death and cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the Lord will answer you, "I will ransom you from the power of the grave."

14. *I will redeem them from death: O Death, I will be your plagues; O Grave, I will be your destruction: repentance shall be hid from My eyes.* Lord, work this quickening in Your people, tonight, and let us live in the fullness of Your Divine Love, and so anticipate the day when our bodies, also, shall be raised by Your glorious power!

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 PRAYER FOR REVIVAL
NO. 2426

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 18, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 14, 1887.

"Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You" Psalm 85:6.

BRETHREN, if you will pray this prayer, it will be better than my preaching from it! And my only motive in preaching from it is that you may pray it. Oh, that at once, before I have uttered more than a few sentences, we might begin to pray by crying, yes, *groaning* deep down in our souls, "Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?"

Notice the style of the praying here—it is in the form of a question and in the shape of a plea. There are very few words and none that can be spared. Godly men, when they prayed of old, meant it! They did not pray for *form's* sake, neither were they very particular about uttering goodly words and fine-sounding sentences—they came to close grips with God. They questioned Him, they pleaded with Him. They drove home the nail and tried to clinch it. I see that in the very shape of the prayer, "Will You not—will You not—will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?" Oh, that we knew how to pray! I fear that we do not. We are missing the sacred art, we are losing the heavenly mystery—we are but apprentice hands in prayer. Compared with such a man as John Knox, whose prayers were worth more than an army of ten thousand men, or compared with the prayers of Luther, how few of us can pray!

Luther was a man of whom they said, as they pointed at him in the street, "There goes a man who can have anything he likes to ask of God." He was the man who, by his prayer, dragged Melancthon back from the very gates of death and, what was more, the man who could shake upon her seven hills the harlot of Rome as she never had been shaken before, because he was mighty with God in prayer! Oh, that I could but stir up my Brothers and Sisters to be instant in season and out of season, if there is such a thing as out of season with God in prayer! Let us get away to our closets! Let us cry mightily to Him! Let us come to close quarters with Him and say, "Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?

I. To come at once to the text, let us ask, WHAT IS THE TIME FOR SUCH A PRAYER AS THIS?

We shall have to look at the Psalm, itself, to help us in the answer. What is the time for offering such a prayer as this? It is, dear Friends, *when we can remember some gracious acts of God in the past.* Read—"Lord, You have been favorable unto Your land. You have brought back

the captivity of Jacob…Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?" Ah, now, some of you can remember grand times, when you were younger than you now are, when the Lord was present with His people in a very glorious fashion—when He laid bare His arm and the people were made to feel His Divine Presence in the preaching of the Word. Do you remember it? The 44th Psalm begins, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old." None of us can remember the early Methodist days—they were over before we were born—but they were very wonderful times when the preaching of the Word of God was like fire in the midst of the people!

[Our friends need not be troubled by the flying of a dove. It will soon go out of the window, no doubt. Let us believe that it has come as a messenger of good. Oh, that the blessed Dove would, Himself, come from Heaven and bring salvation in His wings!]

Well, I was saying that those first Methodist times were brave days, so our fathers have told us, though we cannot remember them. But some of you can remember when you were members of a happy congregation, all united, all earnest, all pleading with God and there were grand Sabbaths, then! You can never forget those days of the Son of Man upon the earth, when conversions were numerous and all the people of God rejoiced and were ready to shout for joy. If you have any recollection of such days as those, pray this prayer, "Lord, what You have done, You can do! Will You not revive us again? You can outdo all we have yet seen of Your work. Come, now, we beseech You, and repeat Your mercies in the eyes of Your people."

After some mercy drops, then, it becomes us to cry for showers of blessing. Pray again the petition that we sang just now—

"Revive Your work, O Lord,
And give refreshing showers,
The glory shall be all Your own,
The blessing, Lord, be ours."

Another time for such a prayer is *after tokens of Divine displeasure*, when we are somewhat under a cloud. Thus the Psalmist says, "Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?" I feel that the Church of God is generally, at this time, in a very sad state and though I am told that I am a croaker, and too nervous, and so on, yet I know what I know, and I speak not without clear information nor without a heart that is heavy at knowing so much of the evil of the times! And, because the times are dark and God's Gospel is at a discount, and prayerfulness of spirit and holiness of life are things not so common among us as they should be, therefore I think that it is time to cry to the Lord, "Will You not revive us again?" I entreat God's people to pray, now, if they have ever prayed in their lives! This is a dark hour of the night—now cry mightily unto the Lord, the God of our salvation—that He will turn our captivity and send the daystar which shall herald that day that shall never know a night! It is good to pray when you have seen good

days and it is equally right to pray when you think that the days are not what they should be.

Another time for praying like this is *when saints feel lethargic*. Do you always feel active? Do you always feel energetic? I think not! If you were to look at one of the statues, say, in Westminster Abbey, you would find that it never complains of rheumatism and is not affected either by heat or cold, because it is not alive. But living men and living women have their changes because they have life. The most flourishing tree that grows sheds its leaves when the time comes. All plants are not always in flower—they have their springs, their summers, their autumns and their winters—and it is just so with God's people. Whenever you, therefore, feel dull and lethargic, here is a prayer for you—"Will You not revive us again? Lord, come and wake us up again! Pour fresh strength into Your weak children! Put the living fire into Your lukewarm children! Raise Your sleepy children, Lord—make us all to live at the highest point of life if, for a while, we have seemed ready to die." Perhaps someone will say, "Then it is the prayer for me, for I feel dull and weak." If so, be sure that you use it. Do not acknowledge the suitability of it and then put it up on the shelf, but pray to the Lord at once, "Will you not revive us again?"

Another time when this prayer is very suitable is *when efforts seem to be useless*—when, for instance, I have preached the Gospel and have had no conversions. When you have been in your Sunday school class and no child has cried to God for mercy. When you have been up and down your tract district and not one person has said a cheering word as to taking interest in the sermon that you have left. When, indeed, you have come to close quarters with some hearts and have really laid yourselves out for the conversion of such and such persons—and you appear to have failed. Well now, if that has been your experience, do not go home miserable, but go to God with this prayer, "Lord, will You not revive us again?" How quickly the Lord can revive us! Here, by the space of 33 years or so, I have been favored by the Grace of God to preach to an attentive congregation, but there have been times when I have felt that there was—

"***No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,"***

when I have preached, but it seemed to be like talking to a dead wall! And yet, before I have been aware of it, God's Spirit has come down upon the people and the same blessed Gospel—for we have not two gospels—has been blessed to many and, one after another, they have cried out, "What must we do to be saved?" Workers for Christ, never think of giving up your work, but stick to it and pray this prayer vehemently, and intensely, "Will You not revive us again? Lord, send us once again times of increased spiritual life, times of greater success in the winning of souls!"

And, once more, I think that this prayer may well be prayed *when we have among us a number of persons who are backsliding*. In a large Church there are always some who are spiritually sick—going back and declining—and some of us know the heartbreak of mourning over those that once ran well, of whom we have sorrowfully to ask, "What hindered them?" There are some who used to be bold in the service of God who now forsakes His House of Prayer, His way and even deny His holy name! Well, what then?—

"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas, what numbers do!"

Then let this prayer be in our heart and on our tongue, "Will You not revive us again? Great Shepherd, come and bring back the stray sheep. Holy Spirit, come, we beseech You, with Your quickening breath, and bring back to life and spiritual health those that are fainting and ready to die."

Thus I think I have shown you that there are many occasions upon which this prayer would be a very fit one. Let us now silently, all of us who know how to pray, breathe this petition into God's ear, "Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?"

II. Secondly, though it will be the same thought presented a little differently, let us consider THE NEED OF SUCH A PRAYER—"Will You not revive us again?" Who needs such a prayer?

Who needs it? Well, first of all, *the minister needs it*. Brothers and Sisters, you make a mistake about some of us ministers—you have a notion that we are always full of Grace, that when we come into the pulpit we are always able to command earnestness and zeal. Do not believe it! We are but poor creatures without our God. Apart from Divine Grace, we are just as hard-hearted towards sinners as any of our people are, and we have to cry mightily to God to keep our spiritual nature alive, even as you do. I entreat you, pray more for us! Pray that God would revive us again! If the preachers grow dull and sleepy, there is no wonder that the people do! Therefore give us a special place in your supplications that we may be kept right for your sakes, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's sake. Oh, pray for ministers! I am not going to find fault with any of them any more than I find fault with myself, but there is grievous need to pray for many occupants of pulpits, that the Lord would revive them again!

There is a very common habit of criticizing us and I am sure I do not mind if you criticize me as much as you like, but it is very difficult for me to find anybody to take this pulpit because anybody that some of you like, others do not like. I have given up any idea of pleasing you all—but I just try to do my best, that is all I can do. But the habit of criticizing ministers is a bad one. Give it up and begin to *pray* for them. Pray more and more for all preachers of the Word, "Lord, revive them. Lord, revive them." I have heard of a minister who preached once about our being epistles, written not with ink, but with the Holy Spirit. One of his divisions was that sometimes ministers were pens and they could not write upon men's hearts because they were not dipped in the ink. I think that there is a great deal in that thought. If a minister comes forward with a good dip of ink in his pen, then he can write upon men's hearts. When the Spirit of God fills us and we are revived, then some good writing will be done—but not else.

But, dear Friends, *all the leaders of our Church need receiving.* Of our Church, I mean. If there are any people who need praying for, it is deacons, and I put the elders with them. Never forget to pray for them. I have no fault to find with them any more than I have to find with the ministers, but they are no better than they should be, and they will not be as good as they should be unless the Grace of God shall come upon

them and bless them! Oh, to have around us a loving band of Church officers! It is our great joy and delight to have such men around us, but may the Lord make better men of them, equip them all for their spiritual work to the very highest degree and fill them all with Divine Life!

I was preaching, once, in a place which happened to be full when I preached there, but the congregation was very small at other times. And when I went into the vestry, I noticed two gentlemen leaning against the mantelpiece in a very comfortable manner, and I asked them if they were the deacons of the Church. They said that they were, and I then told them that I had looked, for some time, to find out the reason why that Church did not prosper, and I had found it out! They were anxious to know what it was, but I did not further inform them. I have no doubt that, often, dead deacons and dead elders prevent a Church prospering—therefore, let us pray earnestly for the leaders of God's Israel, "Lord, revive them again. Put more spiritual life into them."

The same is true of *all the members of the Church without exception*. How much they need reviving! And all the workers, too. You who have a large class to look after. You who are conducting a Mission. Why, if you who lead the way in Christ's work go to sleep, what is to become of the work? So, let us carry upon our hearts in prayer all our fellow members, the workers and the sufferers, and cry to God, "Lord, revive them. Keep them in a good state. Keep them in proper trim that they may do that work in noble fashion, and bring glory to Your holy name. Will You not revive us again?" Brothers, Sisters, let me breathe this prayer in the name of you all, "Lord, we want to serve You at our very best. Revive us again, we beseech You."

But, further, we must pray thus, for there is great need on the part *of the hesitators*. Some of you who are here, tonight, seemed about to be converted *years* ago! I know a man whom, to this day, you cannot get into a place of worship. He says he will never go any more. He declares that he was within an inch of being converted when he went last time and he is afraid to go again! But there are some of you who always come and you have almost learned to sit contentedly upon the brink of decision. Oh, pray for them, dear Friends! Pray for the hesitators, pray for the procrastinators, pray for those who are trifling away their conscience, gradually getting rid of everything like spiritual fear and distress—and who will shut their eyes and sleep themselves into Hell unless God, in great mercy, prevents it! O Lord, will You not revive us again—that these sleepers may wake up and become decided for You?

Besides, we have need to pray this prayer when we think of *the careless ones among us*. What strange people come into such a congregation as this! A man came here this morning for no earthly purpose but to pick pockets—and I dare say he is here again tonight! Look sharp after him! I wish I knew how to pick my way into his heart and to run away with him as a captive for my Lord! Oh, that even *he* might be transformed by Divine Grace! The most curious motives bring people under the sound of the Gospel—some of them positively wicked, others of them quite ridiculous.

Then look at the *outside public*, the myriads who never go to hear the Gospel at all. How are they to be reached by a cold, dead Church? So, for their sakes, for the sake of this great London, for the sake of this great nation, for the sake of the world, let us pray, "O God, be pleased to revive us again!"

I pause here and beseech you not to let me pass the next milestone until each one of you have prayed this prayer, "Will You not revive us again?"

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly, THE ESSENCE OF SUCH A PRAYER—"Will You not revive us again?" What is this prayer if it is analyzed and we get to the very soul of it?

Well, it means, first, *dependence upon God*. If you are praying this prayer aright, you feel, "Lord, nobody can revive us but Yourself." People often talk about "getting up a revival." Is not that a *wicked* thing? "Will You not revive us, O Lord?" The machinery for getting up a revival may often be the greatest hindrance to true godliness! A Church cannot be revived unless *God* revives it! Not a soul is saved, not a saint is quickened and made to grow except by the work of God. That is what this prayer means, "Lord, put Your hand to the work. Put Your right hand to it, we beseech You. We depend alone upon You. Will You not revive us again?"

The essence of this prayer is, next, *confidence in God*. "Lord, You can revive us again. We are not so deep in the mire but that You can lift us out. We are not so dead but that You can make us alive. Will You not revive us again? It is impossible to us, but it is possible to You. Lord, one touch of Your hand, a breath from Your blessed lips, and it is done. Will You not revive us again?" Brothers, Sisters, we believe in God, do we not? And if we do, we believe that whatever state a Church is in, God can bring it out of it! Do not run away from it and say, "God can never bless it." He can bless it! Pray it up into a blessing and make this the essence of your prayer, "Lord, You can revive us. We believe it, and we look for it."

The essence of this prayer is, next, *importunity with God*. "Will You not revive us again?" It is earnest pleading, it is pushing the point home, it is urging it with God. Do this, I pray you, dear Brothers and Sisters, with regard to the state of the Church at the present time. If half a dozen of you would, tonight, or as soon as possible, shut yourselves up a while and begin to cry to God for a revival of religion—and if you continued to cry more and more until it came—there would be grand hopes for the end of this century. If we could get a band of men and women who would give God no rest until He made His Jerusalem a praise in the earth, we should see, between now and the 20th century, something that would make our very eyes sparkle, and our hearts dance for joy! It needs but that we wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant and we may have what we will. We may be in a bad case, but we are not worse off than the churches were a hundred years ago, yet God heard the prayers of mourners in Zion who in secret places cried to Him—and He will hear our prayers, too! Therefore, let us make a solemn league and covenant together, and let us in union and concert of prayer wait upon the Lord and hear what He shall speak, for He will yet speak peace unto His people if we do but

know how to ask for it. I leave with you who are the King's remembrancers this sweet prayer to be prayed night and day—"Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?"

IV. Now I finish with this last head—THE NET RESULT IF THIS PRAYER IS ANSWERED. "Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?"

It seems rather singular—does it not—that the Psalmist should put as the reason for a revival that God's people should *rejoice in Him*? You and I do not always estimate things aright. Preaching is only the stalk—conversion, prayer, praise—these are the full corn in the golden ear! In the garden the leaves may represent the work that is done, but the flowers are the praise that is rendered. In a revival, part of the result is the conversion of men, but the result is the *praise* of *God*—and that revival brings forth most fruit that gives to God the most Glory! God is most glorified when His people rejoice in Him and, therefore, the ripest fruit, the innermost core and center of that which comes of all holy service, is the joy in God which is as worship to Him. I reckon that we have served God when we have fed the poor, when we have taught the ignorant, when we have reclaimed the wanderer, but I am equally sure that we have rendered acceptable sacrifice when we have prayed to God, when we have delighted ourselves in Him, when the joy of our heart has, in silence, exhaled towards Him!

So, therefore, if God will be pleased to send a revival, *His people will rejoice in Him because they are revived*. They will be thankful that their spirits are plucked away from their languor and lethargy and then they will begin to rejoice with the joy of gratitude because God has done such great things for them! And then sinners will be converted and straightway saints will rejoice over sinners saved. They will say—

"Ring the bells of Heaven! There is joy today,
For a soul returning from the wild"

and they will give God the Glory of that soul's salvation. So, in that way, His people will rejoice in Him.

But, best of all, to come back to where I started, when everything is right in the Church and there is a happy and prosperous time, then God's people will silently and inwardly render unto Him a revenue of praise by rejoicing in Him. It must be a good thing—must it not—for you in the midst of the turmoil of business, or for me in the midst of controversy, just to forget it all, to shake it all off and say, "Oh, what a God I have! Blessed be His name"? I often revel in God my exceeding joy—I seem to just give myself up to the enjoyment of a holy festival of delight in God, feasting my heart to the fullest. And what are the dainties that are spread before us at such a feast?

Well, first, I rejoice that there is a God. What a horrible world this would be to live in without God—the house all furnished and nobody at home! But my Lord is always at home and God is better than His world, beautiful as are the avenues of trees and yonder glistening river! God is always at home—that is the joy of our life. I love to see my Father's flag on the top of the castle and to feel that He is at home. His Presence makes everything so bright.

And then what a joy it is to think that He is my God! Whatever I have, or have not, it does not matter, I have a God, and all that there is in God is mine! O my Soul, what a happy, happy being you are! Blessed be God forever for making me, seeing that He has made Himself to be mine! We praise Him, first, for our being, and then for our well-being—and the essence of our well-being is that God, the greatest of all Beings, is ours forever and ever! This God is our God forever and ever! He will be our Guide even unto death and each one of us who is truly His can sing—

"Yes, my own God is He."

As I think of God, I meditate on all His attributes. He is a powerful God. Oh, how I love Him for that! I do not want to have a weak arm to lean upon—let my Lord be the mighty God! Hallelujah to Him because He can do all things and all that power will be used for righteousness and truth! I love to think of Him as the God of Love, nothing, even in His Justice, being contrary to love. Oh, what a blessed God I have—a God of Love! Then I think of Him as a God of Justice, and I am equally pleased with Him. I do not want an unjust God—a God who could pardon sin without Atonement is no God for me! I delight to feel that His justice is as much concerned and bound to save me as His mercy. Oh, what a joy to be able to rejoice in His Justice! And then to rejoice in His Truth—His faithfulness, that He cannot lie—His immutability, that He cannot change—His eternal existence, that He cannot faint or die—ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I shall not attempt to go over all the qualities of the Infinite Jehovah but whatever they are, we delight in them all, and yet we rejoice in Him most of all!

There are many causes for joy to a Christian, but the great wellhead is God Himself. I can rejoice in His people, but then they have their faults. I can rejoice in His Word, but then I sometimes tremble at that Word. I can rejoice in God's works, but then there is a certain terror even about them. But as for God, He Himself is perfect! And whether He is dressed in robes of war, or comes to me with words of peace, now that I am reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, He is altogether delightful under any aspect and in any place!

It may seem a very little thing for us thus to delight in God, but it is the greatest thing of all! It is the crown of a revival that God's people should rejoice in Him.

Now, dear Hearts, as you come to the Communion Table, I want you to try to rejoice in God. "But I am mourning about myself," says one. Well, mourn about yourself if you like, but rejoice in God. "Oh, but I am troubled in my circumstances!" Well, but a child of God should rise *above* circumstances and rejoice in God. There is more in God to cheer you than in your circumstances to depress you! Say to all these things, "Good-bye! Good-bye! Go home, for tonight I am just going to rejoice in God to the fullest!" God help you to do so and if you do, I shall know that the revival has come, and we shall look to see other fruits of it, seeing that this best and sweetest fruit of all is already reached!

Let us, before I dismiss those of you who will be going away, pray this prayer together—

"Lord, revive us again. Lord, revive me. We would, each one of us, say, 'Amen' to that petition. Lord, revive the pastor. Lord, revive the Church officers. Lord, revive the workers. Lord, revive the members of the Church. Lord, revive the backsliders. Lord, revive those who seem to live, but have grown careless. Lord, revive the Church at large throughout the whole earth. Spirit of revival, come upon us, now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen."

And may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit, be with us evermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:22-28; 44:1-8; PSALM 85.

We will read two passages of Scripture this evening, both of which will have a bearing upon the subject we are afterwards to consider from our text. Let us first read a few verses from Isaiah's prophecy, beginning at chapter 43:22. [The publishers chose to put the exposition *after the sermon*, but Brother Spurgeon always did the exposition first.—EO]

Isaiah 43:22. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* This was a sad charge for God to bring against His chosen people. They had grown weary of their God and yet, truly, this charge may well be brought against some of us, for we have grown weary of God, we have forgotten Him in our daily walk and conversation—and have grown cold in our love towards Him.

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* No, God's ways are not ways of irksomeness, but ways of pleasantness! Our religion is no tax upon us. We find Christ's yoke to be very easy and His burden to be very light. All wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense."

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices but you have made Me to serve with your sins. You have wearied Me with your iniquities.* "While your services have been neglected, your sins have been pampered." What an accusation! As God says by the Prophet Amos, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." God seems to be oppressed with the sin of His people, but what comes next? Why, one of the very sweetest verses in the whole of the Scriptures!

25. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* O glorious mercy! We are sunk in the depth of sin and yet God pardons us on the spot! He at once puts every sin away and bids us go in peace.

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together, declare you, that you may be justified. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen.* After all these charges, you see, the love of God to His chosen people is still the same! Well might Paul say, "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." Sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing, but even that shall not divide us from the love of God, for, "while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." So herein Grace triumphs over sin and lays our follies beneath its feet!

2-8. *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. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon your seed, and My blessing is on your offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts, I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God. And who, as I shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. 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.*

Now turn to Psalm 85. This Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician. It is a Psalm worthy of the ablest musician. It is to be sung with care. They are well instructed who can understand it, and enter into the experience it describes. It is called—

"A Psalm for the sons of Korah."

I have often reminded you, dear Friends, that when Korah, Dathan and Abiram went down alive into the pit, the sons of Dathan and Abiram perished with their fathers, but we read, "Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not." We cannot tell why. We must set it down to the Sovereign Grace of God. And if it were so, then I can see why they became singers in the sanctuary!

"A Psalm for the sons of Korah." You will sing best who wonder most at your salvation! You who can see no reason for it, except the Sovereign goodness of God, will have sweet voices tuned with gratitude wherewith to praise God. The first verse of the Psalm contains a happy memory.

Verses 1, 2. *LORD, You have been favorable unto Your land: You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people, You have covered all their sin. Selah.* Let us think of what God has done for His people. He has been very favorable to us in years past. He has lifted up the light of His Countenance upon His chosen ones and made them glad. "You have brought back the captivity of Jacob." We were once in captivity, exiles far off from God and home, but He has led our captivity captive, and we are now in bondage no longer, blessed be His name! Note again what the Psalmist says—"You have forgiven the in-

iquity of Your people." What a joy that is! Forgiven sin is enough to make us sing to all eternity. If sin is pardoned, you have a mass of mercy in that fact too great for you to estimate its value. "You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people." See how the Inspired writer puts it again—"You have covered all their sin"—hidden it, put it out of sight with that Divine covering of the Atonement which has hid forever, even from the eyes of God, the sin of His people! There is a happy memory for us—to see what God has done for us. Let us bless His name for it. Now comes another happy memory.

3. *You have taken away all Your wrath: You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger.* "You did stay Your bow even after it was bent. Even when Your right arm was bared for war, You did make peace for us. 'You have turned yourself from the fierceness of Your anger.' When it burned like fire, yet did You stay it through the great Atonement of Jesus, "Christ our Lord." Now comes in a prayer.

4. *Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease.* "You have done all this for Your people; now do this for us who fear lest we are not Your people—comfort us! Turn us and then take Your anger from our conscience, and let us be at peace with You." How I wish that many in this Tabernacle would pray even now, "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease!" It is the prayer of a Church that is under a cloud. It is the prayer of a nation that is suffering for its sin. It is the prayer of a sinner who sees what God has done for His people and who entreats the Lord to do the same for him.

5. *Will You be angry with us forever?* "Surely we have not got into eternity yet. Lord, do not have eternal anger toward us. 'Will You be angry with us forever?' Will You not hear our prayers? Will You not have mercy upon us?"

5. *Will You draw out Your anger to all generations?* "Shall our children also suffer? Will You not have pity upon *them*?"

6, 7. *Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation.* "We are such poor blind creatures that we cannot see! Yet, O Lord, show us Your mercy, make us see it, reveal it to us and grant us Your salvation! It must be a free grant, a grant of Grace, a grant of Love, therefore, grant us Your salvation." Listen to this eighth verse.

8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak.* "I will be silent. I have spoken to Him, now I will hear what His answer is. I will hold my ears attentive to listen to His voice." O my dear Hearers, when you are willing to hear God, there are good times coming for you!

8. *For He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints.* There is peace, peace, nothing else but peace for them!

8. *But let them not turn again to folly.* For if they do, the Lord will speak to them by rods and chastisements. They that get God's peace must mind that they keep it. They must walk carefully, or else they will break the peace and they may, themselves, get broken in pieces. "Let them not turn again to folly."

9. *Surely His salvation is near them that fear Him.* When you honor Him, reverence Him, worship Him—His salvation cannot be far away from you.

9, 10. *That glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together.* At the Cross is their meeting place! There, you shall see God's mercy and God's truth embracing each other over the great Sacrifice of Christ. Mercy and truth seem set at variance in the sinner's case till they are reconciled by the blood of Jesus!

10. *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* It seemed impossible that God should be righteous and yet be at peace with sinners, but Christ has taken both parties by the hand and, at Calvary, they kiss each other! God is as righteous as if He were not gracious, and as gracious as if He were not just! Yes, His justice and His peace are, each of them, all the brighter because of the other!

11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from Heaven.* Carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness—what a wonderful scene is before us! Truth is coming out of the ground as though it had been a dead thing which begins to live, and leaves its tomb! And righteousness is throwing up the windows of Heaven and leaning out to look down upon the sons of men! "Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from Heaven." What a wonderful meeting this is of truth and righteousness—truth lifting up her hands to Heaven and righteousness putting down its hands to earth!

12. *Yes, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.* It is all well when it is well with us in our relation to God. When we are reconciled to Him, then all things are reconciled by that fact.

13. *Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set us in the way of His steps.* Lord, hear the prayer of this Psalm and answer it to us, for Jesus 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 450 Spanish translations, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org**

"THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT"
NO. 2427

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 18, 1887.

"And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in His Temple the ark of His testament [covenant—R.V.] and there were lightning, and voices, and thundering, and an earthquake, and great hail."
Revelation 11:19.

I shall take the passage quite by itself. I do not fully understand its context, whether it relates to that which goes before or to that which comes afterwards, and happily, it is not necessary for us to know this, for the passage stands complete in itself and is full of valuable instruction.

Dear Friends, even we who believe have as yet failed to see much of the Truth of God. We know enough to save us, to comfort us and to help us on our way to Heaven, but oh, how much of the glory of Divine Truth has never yet been revealed to our eyes! Some of God's children do not fully know even the common Truths of God as yet, and those who do not know them realize but little of their depth and height. From our text it appears that there are certain things of God which as yet we have not seen—there is need that they should be opened up to us—"The Temple of God was opened in Heaven." When our Lord Jesus died, He split the veil of the Temple and so He laid open the Holy of Holies. But such is our dimness of sight that we need to have the Temple opened, and we need to have the Holy of Holies opened, so that we may see what is not really concealed, but what we are not ready to perceive by reason of the slowness of our understandings.

The two words for, "Temple," here, may relate not only to the Temple, itself, but also to the Holy of Holies, the innermost shrine. Both of these, it seems, need to be opened, or else we shall not see what is in them. Blessed be the Holy Spirit that He opens up one Truth after another to us! Our Savior's promise to His disciples was, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth." If we were more teachable. If we were more anxious to be taught and waited upon Him more, He would, doubtless, lead us into many a Truth of God which, at the present moment, we have not fully enjoyed. It is a happy thing for you and for me when at any time we can say, "The Temple of God was opened in Heaven so that we saw even that which was in the innermost shrine of the holy Temple."

The saints in Heaven doubtless behold all the Glory of God so far as it can be perceived by created beings, but we who are on the right way there behold as in a glass darkly, the Glory of the Lord. We know only in part, but the part we know is not as great as it might be—we might know far more than we do even here. Some suppose that they can know but little because, they say, it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." Yes, but why do you stop there? Half a text is often not true—go on to the end of the passage—"But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." And that which your eyes cannot see, and your ears cannot hear, and the heart of man cannot imagine, *can be revealed* to you by the Spirit of the Lord! Oh, that we were more conscious of the power of the Spirit and that we waited upon Him for yet fuller instruction! Then I am persuaded that in our measure and degree, it would be true to us, even as to the perfected ones above, "The Temple of God was opened in Heaven," and they saw that which was in the holiest place.

What did they see when the Temple was opened? When the secret place was laid bare to them, what did they see? That is to be my subject. "There was seen in His Temple the ark of His covenant." If we could look into Heaven at this moment, this is what we would see, "the ark of His covenant." O Sinner, you think that you would see an angry God, but you would see the ark of His covenant! O child of God, perhaps you dream of many things that might distress you in the glory of that sight, but rest content, this would be the main sight that you would see—Jesus, the Incarnate God, the great Covenant Surety! You would see there, where the Godhead shines resplendent, the ark of His covenant!

I. I shall begin by noticing, first, that the ark of His covenant is always near to God—"There was seen in His Temple the ark of His covenant."

Of course, the outward symbol is gone—we are not now speaking of a Temple made with hands, that is to say, of this *building*. We speak of the *spiritual* Temple above. We speak of the spiritual Holy of Holies. If we could look in there, we would see the ark of the covenant and we would see the covenant, itself, always near to God. The covenant is always there. God never forgets it—it is always before Him—"There was seen in His Temple the ark of His covenant."

Why is this? Is it not because the covenant is always standing? The Lord said concerning His people of old, "I will make with them an Everlasting Covenant," of which David said, "Yet has He made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." If God has made a covenant with you, it is not simply for today and tomorrow, nor merely for this life, but for the ages of ages, even forever and ever! If He has struck hands with you through the great Surety, and He has pledged Himself to you, remember, "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Jehovah has said, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed." What He has said He will stand to forever. He will keep His Word. He said to His Son, "I will

preserve You, and give You for a covenant of the people." And He will never revoke the gift. This covenant stands secure! Though earth's old columns bow, and though my spirits sink, and flesh and heart fail me, yet this covenant shall bear me up even to the end.

The Covenant of Grace is forever the same, because, first, *the God who made it changes not.* There can be no change in God. The supposition is inconsistent with a belief in His Deity. Hear what He says—"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." The sun has his changes, but the Father of Lights is without variableness, or shadow of turning. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" God has never to alter His purposes—why should He? Those purposes are always infinitely wise. He knows the end from the beginning, so His Covenant, which He made with such deliberation in the councils of eternity, that Covenant which is sealed with the most precious things He ever had, even with the blood of His only-begotten Son, that Covenant upon which He stakes His eternal honor, for His Glory and honor are wrapped up with the Covenant of Grace—that Covenant cannot be changed because God, Himself, changes not.

Then, next, *the Christ who is its Surety and Substance changes not.* Christ, the great Sacrifice by whose death the Covenant was ratified. Christ, the Surety, who has sworn to carry out our part of the Covenant. Christ, who is the very Sum and Substance of the Covenant, never alters. "All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us." If we had a variable Savior, Brothers and Sisters, we would have a changeable covenant! Look at Adam—he could change and, therefore, he was a poor representative of the human race. Our first federal head soon fell because he was a mere man! But the Surety of the New Covenant is the Son of God, who, like His Father, fails not, and changes not! Though He is of the substance of His mother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh and, therefore, can stand as man's Representative, yet is He Light of Light, very God of very God, and so He stands fast and firm, like the unchanging God, Himself! In this great Truth of God we do and we will rejoice! The Covenant is always before God, for Christ is always there. He, the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God, makes the Covenant to always be close to the heart of God!

And, Beloved, note this. The Covenant must always be near to God because *the love which suggested it changes not.* The Lord loves His people with a love which has no beginning, no end, no boundary, no change. He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." When the love of God's heart goes forth toward the Believer, it is not changeable like the love of man—sometimes high and sometimes low, sometimes strong and sometimes weak. But, as it is said of our Savior, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end," so can it be said of the great Father, that His love is always the same! And if the love which dictated the Covenant

is always in the heart of God, depend upon it that the Covenant which comes of that love is always there in the secret place of the Most High!

Reflect also, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that *the promises contained in the Covenant change not*. I quoted to you, just now, one passage about the promises, and that is enough—"All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, Amen." Not one single promise of God shall ever fall to the ground unfulfilled! His Word, in the form of promises, as well as in the form of the Gospel, shall not return unto Him void! O Souls, you may hang your whole weight upon any promise of God! You need not fear that it will break. Though all the vessels of the King's house were hung on one nail made by Him, that nail would bear them all up, as well as the flagons as the vessels of smaller measure. Heaven and earth may hang upon a single promise of God! The Voice that rolls the stars along and keeps them all in their orbits is that Voice which spoke even the least of the promises and, therefore, every promise of God stands secure forever!

And once more, not only the promises, but *the force and binding power of the Covenant change not*. All God's acts are done with a reference to His Covenant and all His Covenant has a reference to His covenanted ones. Remember what Moses said of old, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Everything that He does follows the line and rule of His Covenant. If He chastens and afflicts, it is not in anger, but in His dear Covenant love. When first that Covenant came into full action with the redeemed, it was all powerful—and it is still just as powerful. All that God does is still guided and directed by His eternal purpose and His Covenant pledges to His people. Stand still, then, and when you look up, if you cannot see that Temple because your eyes of faith are dim—if you scarcely dare to look within the secret place which is the holiest of all—yet know for sure that the Covenant is still there, and always there, whether you see it or see it not!

I will tell you when, perhaps, you will best know that the Covenant is there—when the storm clouds gather the most thickly. When you see the black masses come rolling up, then remember that the Lord said to Noah, "I do set My bow in the clouds and it shall be for a token of a Covenant between Me and the earth." Then shall you know that Jehovah remembers His Covenant! You may even be half glad of a black cloud, that the sun of the Divine Love may paint upon it the many-colored rainbow, that God may look on it and remember His Covenant! It is good for you to look on it, but what must it be for Him to look on it and to remember His Covenant? Be glad that the Covenant is always near to God, as our text declares, "And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in His Temple the ark of His covenant."

II. Now, secondly, the Covenant is seen of saints—"There was seen in His Temple the ark of His covenant."

First, we see it when, by faith, *we believe in Jesus as our Covenant Head*. By faith we know that God has entered into covenant with us. He that believes in Christ Jesus is in covenant with God. "He that believes

on the Son has everlasting life." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." He that believes in Him is at peace with God—he has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. You are in covenant with God, Believer! Wipe your weeping eyes, ask God to take the dust out of them that you may see that there is an unchanging Covenant made with you tonight and forever!

Next, we see this Covenant when, by faith, *we perceive it in God's actions toward us*. Faith may see the Covenant of God in all His actions. Do you not remember how the old Scotch woman blessed God for her porridge, but she blessed Him most of all because the porridge was in the Covenant? God had promised bread and water and, therefore, it was sure to come to her! God sent her bread to her in the form of porridge and she blessed the Lord that it was in the Covenant. Now, I thank God that food is in the Covenant, and that raiment is in the Covenant. It is written, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass," so they are in the Covenant. Life is in the Covenant and death is in the Covenant—"To die is gain." Everything that is to happen to us is in the Covenant! And when faith sees it so, it makes life a happy one. Am I chastened? I say to myself, "Well, the rod was in the Covenant, for the Lord said that if His children disobeyed Him, He would chasten them with the rod of men. If I never had the rod, I would be afraid I was not in the Covenant." Is it not written, "In the world you shall have tribulation?" That is a part of the Covenant, you see, so that when you get it, say to yourself, "The God who is evidently keeping this part of His Covenant will keep the rest of it for me, His child."

Brothers and Sisters, we get, perhaps, the best sight of the Covenant when, *by prayer we plead it*. In that hour of our wrestling, in the time of our inward craving of mercies from the hand of God, we come, at last, to this, "Lord, You have promised. Do as You have said." I love to put my finger on a promise and then to plead it with the Lord, saying, "This is Your Word, my Father, and I know that You will not run back from it. O God, I believe in the Inspiration of this Book and I take every word of it as coming from Your lips. Will You not seal it to my conscience, my heart, my experience, by proving it to be true?" Have you ever found the Lord's promises fail you? I remember one who had put in the margin of her Bible in several places, "T and P"—and when she was asked what those letters meant, she said, "They mean, 'Tried and Proved.' As I go through life, I keep trying and proving the promises of God and then I put a mark in the margin of my Bible next to each one I have tested, that I may not forget it the next time I have to plead it." That is the way to see the Covenant at the right hand of God, when you plead it in prayer!

And there are some of us, I think, who can say that *our experience up till now proves* that God does not forget His Covenant. We have wandered, but we have been able to say, "He restores my soul," for He has restored us! We have needed many things and we have gone to Him in prayer and pleaded that word, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly," and He has listened to the cries of His servants! He said He would do so—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver

you, and you shall glorify Me." He has remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever and some of us who are no longer young can set to our seal that God is true because of many experiences of His faithfulness! If they tell us that there is nothing in the Bible, and nothing in God, and nothing in the Gospel of Christ, we laugh them to scorn! We have now, for many a year, lived upon the faithfulness of God, and we cannot be driven into a distrust of Him. He is faithful and His mercy endures forever!

Do you not also think that, *when we arrive in Heaven, we shall have a wonderful retrospect*, and that retrospect will all come to this—"The Temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in His Temple the ark of His covenant"? Miss Hannah Moore very prettily puts it that we do not often see the right side of things here. She went into a carpet factory and she looked at what the workmen were doing—and she could see nothing that looked like beauty of design. There were tags and ends hanging out and she said to the men, "I cannot perceive any design here," and they answered, "No, Madam, for you are on the wrong side of the carpet." When she went round to the other side, she saw the beauty of the workmanship! Alas, we are at present on the wrong side of God's work—we must get to Heaven to see it perfectly! And when we get there, we shall—

"***Sing, with wonder and surprise,***
His loving kindness in the skies,

and we shall say, "It was all right. It could not have been better."—

"***Every dark and bending line***
Meets in the center of His love."

God has not erred. He has not gone abut the longest way to do His work, but He has done it in the wisest and most prudent manner, all that was for the best and highest interests of His dear covenanted ones!

Thus I have shown you that sometimes, and it should be always, God's people see that glorious Covenant of Grace which is in the Temple above.

III. Now I want to have your attention while I say briefly, in the third place, that the Covenant contains much that is worth seeing.

Let us think of what was in the ancient Ark of the Covenant, for all that was in that ark as a *type* is to be seen in Christ, our heavenly Covenant Ark above.

In that ark, if you and I could have gone into the Holy Place, and have had our eyes strengthened to look, we would have seen, first, *God dwelling among men*. What a wonderful thing! Over the top of the lid of that sacred coffer which was called the ark, there shone an amazing light which was the index of the Presence of God. He was in the midst of the camp of Israel. He that fills Heaven and earth, the infinite Jehovah, deigned to make that place His special dwelling place, so that He is addressed as, "You that dwells between the cherubim." Here is a part of the New Covenant—"I will dwell in them and walk in them." It is marvelous that God speaks with men. He whom you heard thundering, last night, as He drove His chariot through the sky—that God in infinite condescension speaks with us—He has come down to us and taken us into rela-

tionship with Himself in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at once the Fellow of the Almighty, and the Brother of the sons of men! O Beloved, rejoice in the Covenant, that God is no longer divided from men! The chasm made by sin is filled! The gulf is bridged and God now dwells with men and manifests Himself to them! "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Next, in that ark you would have noticed, if you could have seen into it, *God reconciled and communing with men upon the Mercy Seat*. Over the top of that ark, as I have told you, was a golden lid, which fitted it and covered it exactly. That golden lid was called the Mercy Seat, the Throne of Grace. There God spoke with men. He sat there, as it were, enthroned as the Friend of men. Now, it is a part of the Covenant that God hears prayer, that God answers our petitions, that He meets us in a way of reconciled love, that He speaks to us in tones which the spirit can hear though the ear cannot. Thank God for a blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat! What would we do if we had not that as our meeting place with the thrice-holy Jehovah?

Then, within the ark, underneath the lid, if we could have looked in, we would have seen the Law, *the two tablets of stone* which represent *Law fulfilled in Christ* and forever laid up in His heart, and laid up in our hearts, too, if we delight in the Law of God after the inward man! Now, this is our joy, that the Law of God has nothing against the Believer. It is fulfilled in Christ and we see it laid up in Christ, not to be a stone to fall upon us to grind us to powder, but beautiful and fair to look upon as it is in the heart of Christ and fulfilled in the life of Christ. I rejoice in the Covenant which contains in it stipulations all fulfilled and commands all executed by our great Representative!

Together with those tablets of the Law there was laid up a rod, a rod which had originally been a dry stick in the hands of Aaron, but when it was laid up before the Lord, it budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds! So, in the Covenant of Grace, we see *the Kingdom established and flourishing in Christ*, and we rejoice in it. Oh how pleased we are to bow before His fruitful scepter! What wonderful fruit we gather from that blessed rod! Reign, reign, Jesus, reign! The more You rule us, the more You are absolute Sovereign of our hearts, the happier shall we be, and the more shall we delight ourselves in You! There is no liberty like complete subjection beneath the sway of Jesus who is our Prophet, Priest and King!

Then, by the side of that rod there was laid up the *golden pot full of manna, the provision made for the wilderness*. Let us rejoice that there is in the Covenant all the provision that we need. God has laid up for us in Christ all our spiritual meat, all the food that we shall ever need between here and Heaven. "Feed me till I need no more," we cry to our blessed Covenant Representative—and He will do so!

Then, over the top of the ark, sat *the cherubim with outstretched wings*, as, I think, *representing how the angels are in league with us, and with the angels all the forces and powers of the universe.* This day the beasts of the field are our friends and the stones of the field have ceased

to be our foes. Child of God, you may travel by land or sea. You may go where you will, for everywhere you are in your Father's house! All that you see about you is a friend to you, since you are a friend to God. I often wonder that the earth bears up ungodly men. It must groan beneath the weight of a swearer! It must wish to open and swallow him up. But with the gracious man, the man who fears God, all things are at peace, and we may know it to be so. "You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

We do not often enough realize, I think, the friendship of all God's creatures to those who are His children. St. Francis, though he was a Romish monk, yet had a true idea when he used to regard the sparrows and other birds of the air, and even the dogs in the street, as his friends and his brothers, and talked to them as such. And Luther was much of the same mind when he opened his window and listened to the chirpings of the robins in the early spring, and felt that they had come to teach the theological doctor some lesson which he had not learned. Oh yes, oh yes, we are quite at home anywhere, now that God is our God! True, the earth travails, and is in pain, and the creation suffers and will suffer till Christ comes again, but still, her travail is *our* travail, and we are in sympathy with her, and when she reflects the Glory of her God she is our mirror in which we see our Father's face.

Thus, I think, I have shown you that there is much to be seen in the Ark of the Covenant. God give us Grace, like the angels, to fix our eyes upon it! "Which things the angels desire to look into." We have more to do with the Ark of His Covenant than they have—let us be more desirous, than they are, to look therein!

IV. I close with this fourth point. The Covenant has solemn surroundings. Listen—"There were lightning, and voices, and thunder, and an earthquake, and great hail."

When the people entered into covenant with God on Sinai, the Lord came down upon the top of the mountain and there were thunder, and lightning, and voices, and an earthquake. There were all these tokens of His Presence and *God will not leave the Covenant of His Grace without the sanctions of His power*—that thunder, that lightning, that storm—all these are engaged to keep His Covenant! When they are needed, the God who smote Egypt with great hailstones, the God who make the Kishon to sweep His enemies away, the God who made the stars in Heaven to fight against Sisera will bring all the overwhelming forces that are at His command to the help of His people and the fulfilling of the Covenant which He has made with them!

O you who are His people, fall back in confidence upon the God who has treasures of snow, and hail, and the dread artillery of storm and tempest! Most of you, my Hearers, have never seen a great storm, nor heard in its majesty the thunder of God's power. You must be in the tropics to know what these can be—and even then you would have to say—"These are but parts of His ways." Oh, how the Lord can shake the earth and make it tremble, even, to its deep foundations when He

pleases! He can make what we call, "the solid earth," to be as weak as water when He does but lift up His finger! But all the power that God has—and it is boundless—is all in that right hand which has been lifted high to Heaven in the solemn oath that He will save His people! Therefore, lean upon God without the shadow of a doubt! He may well put all your fears to rest even by the thunder of His power!

Then reflect that there is another side to this Truth of God. You who are not in covenant with God, you who have not believed that Jesus is the Christ, you who have never fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you, you who refuse the Divine mercy which comes to you through the bleeding Person of the suffering Christ—remember that there will be for you the thunder, the lightning, the voices, the earthquake and the great hail, for these set forth the *terrors of eternal Law overthrowing God's adversaries*! You have no conception of what God will do with the ungodly! False teachers may smooth it down as much as they like, but this Book is full of thunderbolts to you who refuse God's mercy! Listen to this one text—"Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Can you sport with that?

Listen to another—"Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies!" What will you say to that, or to this? "And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever." "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." They talk as if we invented these terrible words, but we did not—we merely quote the Scriptures of the Truths of God and they are terrible, indeed, to the wicked! They should make men start in their sleep and never rest until they find a Savior!

A Universalist once said to a Christian man that whatever he did, God would not punish *him.* And the other replied, "If I spit on your god, I suppose he will not punish me. If I curse him, if I defy him, it will all come right at last?" "Yes," said the Universalist. "Well," answered the other, "that may be the character of *your* God, but don't you try that kind of thing with *my* God, the God of the Scriptures, or else you will find that because He is Love, He cannot and He will not suffer this world to be in anarchy, but He will rule it, and govern it, and He will punish those that refuse His infinite compassion."

So I beseech you, my Hearers, fly to Jesus at once! Weary, and heavy-laden, look to Him, for He says especially to you, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." The Lord add His blessing to His Truths I have tried to preach to you, the sweet and the terrible alike, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Hebrews 9

Verse 1. *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of Divine service and a worldly sanctuary.* That is to say, a material sanctuary, a sanctuary made out of such things as this world contains. Under the Old Covenant, there were certain outward symbols. Under the New Covenant, we have not the symbols, but we have the *substance* itself. The old Law dealt with types and shadows, but the Gospel deals with the spiritual realities themselves.

2, 3. *For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All.* All this was by Divine appointment—the form of the rooms, the style of the furniture—everything was ordained of God and that not merely for ornament, but for purposes of instruction. As we shall see farther on, the Holy Spirit intended a significance, a teaching, a meaning, about everything in the old tabernacle, whether it was a candlestick, or a table, or the showbread.

4, 5. *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 cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.* It would not have been to the point which the Apostle had in hand, so he waived the explanation of those things for another time.

6-8. *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 this signifying.* It is from this sentence that I am sure that the Holy Spirit had a signification, a meaning, a teaching, for every item of the ancient tabernacle and Temple, and we are not spinning fancies out of idle brains when we interpret these types, and learn from them important Gospel lessons. "The Holy Spirit this signifying"—

8. *That the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.* It was necessary that you should take away the sacred tent, the tabernacle, yes, and take away the Temple, too, before you could learn the spiritual meaning of them. You must break the shell to get at the kernel. So God had ordained. Hence, there is now no tabernacle, no Temple, no holy court, no inner shrine, the Holy of holies. The material worship is done away with in order that we may render the *spiritual* worship of which the material was but the type.

9. *Which was a figure for the time then present.* Only a figure, and only meant for "the time then present." It was the childhood of the Lord's people. It was a time when, as yet, the Light of God had not fully broken in upon spiritual eyes, so they must be taught by picture books. They must have a kind of Kindergarten for the little children, that they might learn the elements of the faith by the symbols, types and representations of a material worship. When we come into the true Gospel Light, all that is done away with—it was only "a figure for the time then present."

9. *In which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.* All these rites could only give a fleshly purity, but they could not touch the conscience. If men saw what was meant by the outward type, then the conscience was appeased, but by the outward sign, itself, the conscience was never comforted if it was a living and lowly conscience.

10. *Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.* These ordinances were only laid upon the Jews—not upon any other people and only laid upon them until the better and brighter days of reformation and fuller illumination.

11. *But Christ*—Oh, how we seem to rise when we begin to get near to Him, away from the high priests of the Jews! "But Christ"—

12. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* The Jewish high priests went once a year into the Holy of Holies. Each year, as it came round, demanded that they should go again. Their work was never done! But, "He entered in once," and only once, "into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." I love that expression, "eternal redemption"—a redemption which really does redeem and redeems forever and ever! If you are redeemed by it, you cannot be lost. If this redemption is yours, it is not for a time, or for a season, but it is, "eternal redemption." Oh, how you ought to rejoice in the one entrance within the veil by our Great High Priest who has obtained eternal redemption for us!

13-15. *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.* When you come to deal with Christ, you have to do with eternal things. There is nothing temporary about Him, or about His work. It is "eternal redemption" that He has obtained for us! It is an "eternal inheritance" that He has purchased for us!

16, 17. *For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives.* Or, "Where a covenant is, there must also be the death of him who covenants, or of that by which the covenant is established." Or read it as we have it in our version, for it seems as if it must be so, although we are loathe to give the meaning of "testament" to the word, since its natural meaning is evidently *covenant*—"Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives." Or, if you will, while the victim that was to confirm the covenant lived, the covenant was not ratified—it must be slain before it could be thus effective.

18-22. *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.* There is no truth more plain than this in the whole of the Old Testament! And it must have within it a very weighty lesson to our souls. There are some who cannot endure the doctrine of a substitutionary Atonement. Let them beware lest they be casting away the very soul and essence of the Gospel! It is evident that the Sacrifice of Christ was intended to give ease to the conscience, for we read that the blood of bulls and of goats could *not* do that. I fail to see how any doctrine of atonement except the Doctrine of the Vicarious Sacrifice of Christ can give ease to the guilty conscience! Christ in my place suffering the penalty of my sin—that pacifies my conscience, but nothing else does! "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

23. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these.* These things down below are only the *patterns*, the models, the symbols of the heavenly things! They could, therefore, be ceremonially purified with the blood which is the symbol of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ.

23, 24. *But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into Heaven, itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us.* He never went within the veil in the Jewish Temple—that was but the symbol of the true Holy of Holies. He has gone "into Heaven, itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us."

25-28. *Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.* There is no need that He should die again, His one offering has forever perfected all His people! There remains nothing but His final coming for the judgment of the ungodly and the acquittal of His redeemed.

28. *And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* Christ's second coming will be "without sin," and without a sin offering, too, wholly apart from sin, unto the salvation of all His chosen. May we all be among those who are looking for Him! 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.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB
NO. 2428

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 21, 1887.

"And he said unto me, Write, 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"
Revelation 19:9.

You will perceive that there was an exhortation to John to "Write." Why was he especially to write these words down? I conceive that it was, first, because the information here recorded was valuable—"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." It was worth while that this new beatitude should be recorded, so the angel of God said to the Apostle, "Write." It was also to be written because of its absolute certainty—"These are the true sayings of God." This blessedness was not a thing to be spoken of once and then to be forgotten, but it was to be recorded so that future ages might see that it is surely so, assuredly so beyond all question! God has bidden this record to be written in black and white, yes, engraved as with an iron pen and lead in the rock, forever—"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

It was to be written, no doubt, to bring it under our consideration as a thing worthy of being weighed, a text to be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested—not merely spoken to John by the angel of God, but written by the Apostle at the express order of the Spirit of God. Lord, did You say to John, "Write it," and shall I not read it? Did you bid the beloved disciple write it and do You not, thereby, virtually bid me consider it and remember it? Lord, by Your Spirit, write this message on my heart, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

I find that my text is succeeded, as well as preceded, by something remarkable—"He said unto me, These are the true sayings of God." Lest any doubt should arise in our minds about the marriage supper of the Lamb, or about the fact that many are called to that supper, or about the blessedness of such as are called, the angel says, "These are the true sayings of God." Some things appear to be too good to be true. We frequently meet with sinners, under a sense of guilt, who are staggered by the greatness of God's mercy. The Light of the Gospel has been too bright for them! They "could not see for the glory of that Light," as Paul said in describing the appearance of Christ to him when on the road to Damascus. So, "to make assurance doubly sure," that we may not question its truth because of its greatness, we have this solemn declaration especially certified by order of the Lord, under the hand and seal of the Spirit of

God—"These are the true sayings of God." O Sirs, the Lord Christ will come again! He will come to gather together His people and to make them forever blessed! And happy will you be if you are among that chosen company! If you shall meet the King of Kings with joyful confidence, you shall be blessed, indeed!

You noticed that I read parts of two chapters before I came to my text and I did it for this purpose. The false harlot-church is to be judged and then the true Church of Christ is to be acknowledged and honored with what is called a marriage supper. The false must be put away before the true can shine out in all its luster! Oh, that Christ would soon appear to drive falsehood from off the face of the earth! At present it seems to gather strength, and to spread till it darkens the sky and turns the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood. Oh, that the Lord would arise and sweep away the deadly errors which now pollute the very air! We long for the time when the powers of darkness shall be baffled and the pure Everlasting Light shall triumph over all! We do not know when it shall be—

"But, come what may to stand in the way,
That day the world shall see,"

when the Truth of God shall vanquish error and when the true Church shall be revealed in all her purity and beauty as the Bride of Christ—and the apostate church shall be put away once and for all and forever!

Time rolls wearily along just now, apparently, and some hearts grow heavy and sad, but let us take courage. The morning comes as well as the night and there are good days, not so far off as we have sometimes fancied—and some of us may yet live to see times which shall make us cry, "Lord, now let Your servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen Your salvation." Whether we live till Christ comes again, or whether we fall asleep in Him, many of us know that we shall sit down at the great wedding feast in the end of the days and we shall partake of the supper of the Lamb in the day of His joy and Glory! We are looking across the blackness and darkness of the centuries into that promised millennial age wherein we shall rejoice with our Lord with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

I. I will no longer delay you from the text. And in meditating upon this august marriage festival, I want you to notice, first of all, THE DESCRIPTION OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

There is no marriage without a bridegroom. There is no marriage of the Church without the appearance of Christ and, therefore, He must be manifested. He must come out of the ivory palaces wherein He hides Himself, today, and He must appear in His Glory! And when He shall appear, what shall be His title? Notice it— "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

This term— "*the Lamb*"—seems to be the special name of Christ which John was accustomed to use. I suppose he heard it, first, from that other John called the Baptist, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Isaiah had compared the Christ to a lamb brought to the slaughter, but he had not really called Him "the Lamb of God." This beloved John, who knew the Master better than any-

one else, seemed to love constantly to call Him by this most expressive name.

Now, if in any Book of the Bible we might have expected that our Lord would *not* have been called the Lamb, it would have been the Book of the Revelation. It might seem as if the name, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" might appropriately have been used every time, and the name of, "the Lamb," have been dropped. The name, "the Lamb," seemed suitable for Jesus here below, despised and rejected of men, led to the slaughter, dumb and patient beneath the hands of cruel men. The name, "the Lamb," seemed suitable for Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha—but John calls the Savior by this name many times all through this Book of the Revelation! He writes constantly about the Lamb, the Lamb in the midst of the Throne, the Lamb leading His people to living fountains of water. And now the angel tells him to write about the marriage supper of the Lamb!

This is the more remarkable because, at first sight, it may seem incongruous to blend these two things together—the Lamb and a marriage supper. But the incongruity of figures must sometimes be allowed in order to make more apparent some master Truth of God which must not and cannot be veiled for the sake of correct rhetoric! It sometimes happens that language becomes a burden to thought—great thoughts will break the backs of words and crush them into the dust. So it happens that comparisons and metaphors crack and break, like rotten wood in the wind, under the stress of some great master thought which rules the writer's mind. It matters not whether it is congruous in *figure*, it is suitable enough in *fact* that the wedding at the last should be the marriage of the Lamb!

What do I infer from this? I gather, in a word, just this, that Christ *anywhere*, even in His highest Glory, still wishes us to regard Him as the Sacrifice for sin. He desires to be viewed by us in His Character as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. This is a Character which He never lays aside and it is as the Lamb that He will manifest Himself in the consummation of all things when His Church is perfected!

First*, as the Lamb, He is the one everlasting Sacrifice for sin.* Where is the lamb that God has provided for a burnt offering? It is Jesus! Where is the morning and evening lamb to take away Israel's guilt? It is Jesus! Where is the lamb that bleeds and dies, that with its blood the lintel and the two side posts may be smeared to secure the inmates of the house from the destroying angel in Egypt? It is Jesus! All His life, and in His death, He was no lion, no beast of prey—He was the gentle, suffering, sacrificial Victim, dying that we may not die, presenting Himself a Sacrifice acceptable unto God!

Now, because Christ was the Lamb, suffering for sin, and because He delights to remember that He was our Sacrifice, therefore *He is seen in that capacity in the day of the gladness of His heart.* He links the memory of His grief with the manifestation of His Glory—and as He was a Lamb to redeem His Church, so does He appear as a Lamb in the marriage supper of His Glory! One reason why He does this is because He is espe-

cially glorious in the Character of the Lamb of God. I cannot conceive of our Lord Jesus Christ as ever being less than infinitely glorious, but, dear Friends, if there is ever a time when we can appreciate the splendor of His Character more fully than at other times, it is when He is on the Cross—when He dies, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Tell me not of all the Glory which surrounds Him now in the midst of the Throne—I cannot conceive any Glory exceeding in brightness the Glory of His self-denial, the Glory of His taking upon Himself the form of a Servant and, being found in fashion as a Man, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. The glory of men consists in what they are prepared to suffer for others. The glory of a king must lie, not in the crowns he wears, but in what he does for his subjects—and Christ's Glory is most seen in His sacrifice for sinners! "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But Christ laid down His life for His *enemies*. When the Lord Jesus Christ put on the bloody shirt in Gethsemane. When He bedecked Himself with the five bright rubies of His wounds. When He was adorned with the crown of thorns and, last of all, when He was decorated with that robe of blood as the soldier pierced His side, then it was that He was more illustrious than at any time before or since in the eyes of those who think aright! This is the star in His sky, no, the *sun* that eclipses all the stars—that Jesus loved, pitied and had compassion even to the death upon the sons of men! So, in the day of His marriage, He comes out, again, in this highest and noblest of Characters—especially glorious as a Lamb! It is as a Lamb that He celebrates the marriage supper with His Bride, the Church.

Brothers and Sisters, I think that it is very appropriate for Christ to appear in Glory as a Lamb, because *it is as the Lamb that He has most fully displayed His love to His Church*, to which He is espoused, and to which He is to be married at that Last Great Day. Beloved, the marriage supper is a feast of *love*—there, love is at home. So Jesus, that He may reveal Himself in His love best of all, appears as a bleeding Sacrifice on the day of His love's triumph. I do not know how to talk about this great theme, but this Truth of God rests in my heart and makes me feel more glad than I can tell. It lies like a cake of sweet perfume upon the altar of my soul and burns there with the soft bright flame of love. And I rejoice to know that in the day when Jesus takes His Church by the hand and leads her Home to His Father's house, He will appear in that Character in which He most of all has shown His love to His beloved. You see most of His love when you see most of His griefs and most of His condescension—and, therefore, in that Character does He appear at His marriage supper.

There is one other thought before I leave this first point. *It is as the Lamb that Christ is best loved of our souls*. At any rate, you feel your affections most drawn out toward Him who suffered in your place. Tell me, you who know Him most, you who love Him best, is it not so? You have seen Him on His Throne, but you have fallen at His feet as dead, for the

sight has been too much for you! But when you have seen Him on the Cross, oh, then your heart has melted while your Beloved has spoken to you and you have said, "He has won my heart. Now He has completely mastered me—I must love Him now." So then, you see, on the day of His marriage, when He would be best loved, Christ comes unto His Church robed in that garment in which He appears most lovely in her sight, and He draws out at that marriage supper, more fully than ever He did, all the love of all His redeemed for whom He laid down His life!

Now, you who care not for my Lord as a Substitute and a Sacrifice, will you be at the marriage supper when He appears as the Lamb? It is as the Lamb of God that you reject Him! You are willing to take Him, you say, as a Teacher, or as an Exemplar, but as the Sacrifice for sin you will not have Him. Then, neither will He have you! In that great day, as you have disowned the vicarious Sacrifice, He who was that Sacrifice will disown you! There will be no marriage between your soul and Christ if you will not have Him as the Lamb, for that marriage feast is to be the marriage of the Lamb, and of none else. As long as this tongue can move and these lips can speak, I will preach nothing to you but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified—that He, who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! I know no Savior but that Christ, "who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree," and who, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and now in Glory bears the marks of the great Propitiation by which His people are saved!

II. But now, secondly, I have to speak a little upon THE MEANING OF THE MARRIAGE SUPPER—"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." What will that marriage supper be? There will come a time when all God's redeemed shall be saved.

There will come a day when all who have died shall have been raised, again, from the tomb, and those who remain alive shall have been changed, so that their corruption shall have put on incorruption, and mortality shall have put on immortality. *Then will the Church be perfect and complete.* No one member will be missing. There will be no spot or wrinkle remaining in her. Then it shall come to pass that Christ will celebrate this marriage supper, which will be *the bringing of the people of God into the closest and happiest union with Christ their Lord in Glory.*

Even now the Lord Jesus Christ is no stranger to some of us, and we are not strangers to Him. Yet there shall come a day when we shall see Him face to face and then we shall know Him with a clearer and fuller knowledge than is possible for us today. What that bliss will be, I cannot tell. Oh, the ineffable brightness when we shall see the face of Jesus! Oh, the unspeakable sweetness when we shall hear His voice! Oh, the amazing bliss when He shall manifest Himself to us in all His Glory! And there will come such a day for all whom He has redeemed, for all who trust Him and rest in His atoning Sacrifice. That will be the marriage supper of the Lamb!

That feast will be, like most other marriage suppers, *the fulfillment of long expectation.* Our Lord has waited long for His perfected Church. He

espoused Himself to her before ever the earth was, but there was much to be done before she was prepared for the marriage. The Bridegroom, too, had to leave His Father and become one with His Bride by taking upon Himself our humanity. For our sake He quit the thrones and royalties of Heaven that He might be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—and here He was born, and here He lived, and here He died! But still, the Bride was not ready—and it is not till you come to this chapter that you read, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." Souls have to be saved—new-created, blood-washed, sanctified, perfected—and the whole of them must be gathered to make up the body of Christ's Spouse. And when that is done, and she is all complete, the expectations of the Christ will be fulfilled at that marriage supper. O Beloved, you do not know the longings of the heart of Christ for that day of glory! For this He lived! For this He died! For this He continually pleads that all for whom He shed His precious blood might be His in that day! That day is fast coming and when it arrives, then will be the wedding feast above.

Then will be, also, the day *of the open publication of the great fact of mutual love and union*. At this moment Christ loves His Church and He is one with her, but the world, as a whole, does not know it. It does not know either Him or her, nor does it care about them. But the day shall come when Christ will bring His hidden people into the light of day! "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." And then shall the Christ, Himself, also be manifested, though long hidden! Oh, what a day that will be when the eyes of the entire universe shall be turned in one direction and the glorious Christ, in the splendor of His Manhood and of His Godhead, shall take the hand of His redeemed Church and, before men and angels and devils, declare Himself to be one with her forever and forever! That will be the beginning of the marriage supper of the Lamb—it will be the publication to all of the great fact of mutual love and union!

Moreover, the picture of a marriage supper is intended to set forth *the overflowing of mutual delight and joy*. There is too much joy for two! They are so happy that they invite others to come in and share the banquet. So, in those days, how delighted this blessed Christ and His Church will be with one another! How the Church will rejoice in Him! How He will rejoice in the Church! What hallelujahs will they raise to Him and oh, with what delight will He look upon all His people and see in them neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing—because His blood has cleansed them and His Spirit has perfectly sanctified them! Of old it was written, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." But what will that rest of love be and that singing of the Christ over His blood-bought ones when they are all before Him, and all made like unto Himself to reflect the Glory of God!

Brethren, to add just one other thought, that marriage feast will be *the grandest display of Christ's magnificent generosity in a banquet*. If people ever make a little more show than on other occasions, it is usually at a

marriage feast. And oh, what a show Christ will make that day! Depend upon it, there will be no little show when He shall come in the Glory of His Father, with all the holy angels with Him, and with the very clouds of Heaven to be the dust of His feet! Then shall His Church come before Him in all the glory He has given to her. Her raiment shall be of worked gold. There is no luster, no beauty, no excellence that can be compared with that which Christ will put upon His Church! She will admire Him and He will admire her. She will bless Him and He will bless her. Oh, I talk but feebly about lofty things that need a poet's eye and a poet's tongue! No, put away your poetry—the most sober language that can be uttered might better fit a theme in which the highest sublimities must be simplicities! I want you all to believe that there is to be a day when all the chosen seed, blood-bought and saved, will make one body—and Christ shall come and glorify them with Himself in a union that shall never know an end, though the ages roll along forever and for ever!

III. Now, thirdly, I must speak a little about THE PERSONS WHO ARE CALLED TO THIS SUPPER. Who are the people who are called to this great marriage feast?

In one sense, you are all called to it. O my Hearers, there is a call of the Gospel to each of you! We are bid to preach it to every creature under Heaven and we do preach it, leaving none of you out. "Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The call, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes," is to the foolish virgins as well as to the wise, and if you do not come, it is not because you were never invited and never entreated to come to Christ! By the Spirit of the living God, I implore you men and women to seek the Savior's face! I may never address you all again, as perhaps I have never addressed some of you before, but by Him that comes in the clouds of Heaven I entreat you to fly to Jesus, the great and only Savior! Seek His Grace, now, that you may see His face with joy in the great day of His appearing!

But this is not exactly what the text means, for, although there is a blessedness in being called, it curdles into a curse if, being called, sinners refuse to come to the Savior. Who, then, are they who are specially called to this marriage feast? Well, first, they are *those who are so called as to accept the invitation*. Have you come to Jesus? Are you trusting Him? Will you have Him? Does your heart say, "Yes"? Then, He is yours! There was never any unwillingness in Christ to receive the guilty. The unwillingness is in you—and if the unwillingness has gone from you, since it never was in Him, take Him and have Him forever! Take Him and have Him tonight! When Abraham's servant wanted to take Rebekah to Isaac, her mother and brother said to her, "Will you go with this man?" So would I say to any young man or woman I may be addressing, "Will you go with Christ? Will you have Christ?" If so, He will have you! If you are willing to have Him, you are among those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!

To help you to judge yourself, here is another test. *Those who are called to that marriage supper love the Bridegroom*. He will have no ene-

mies at His banquet! Do you love Jesus? Does your heart leap at the sound of His name? Timid trembling woman, do you love Him? You cannot speak for Him, but you could die for Him? Ah, well, if your heart goes after Him, His heart has long ago gone after you and you shall be at the marriage supper! I tell you more—you shall be a part and parcel of His Bride in the day of His appearing!

Again, *those who are called to this supper are made ready*. Are you made ready? You remember that the man who came to the wedding feast was bid to put on a wedding garment—have you put on the righteousness of Christ? Has Christ put on you His sanctification? Are you changed in heart? Without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Has the Grace of God renewed you? Then you are one of those who shall come to the wedding—among the blessed who are called to that great marriage feast!

You may help to judge yourself by answering one more question. *Have you any desire to go to that marriage feast*? Do you look for Christ's coming? There are some who are altogether unconcerned about it—they do not care about Christ or His coming—it is all nothing to them, an airy nothing! O my Hearer, I trust that you are not of that opinion! But if you are looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of God. If your faith is resting on His first coming and your hope is in His second coming—if you see your sin put away by His coming as a Sin-Offering—and then your sorrow put away by His coming as your Bridegroom, then, dear Heart, be sure that you would not have these drawings towards Him unless He had drawn you to Himself! He is drawing you—therefore, run after Him!

IV. Now, lastly, let us think of THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH IS ASCRIBED TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO THIS MARRIAGE SUPPER.

I know that I am speaking to many who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb and I want you, my dear Hearers, to enjoy yourselves, for *you have a prospect which blesses you even now*. If you are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the text says that you are blessed and truly blessed you are! "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." If you had an invitation to see the Queen, tomorrow, some of you who are wonderfully loyal would think a great deal of it, and you would be saying to yourselves, "Well, we are going home tonight to a very narrow room in a very poor cottage, but we have something great in prospect tomorrow! And oh, think of this, you who are poor, you who are pained, you who are very weak, you who are cast down—within a short time your eyes "shall see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off."

It may be only a few days, or weeks, or months—certainly only a few years at most—and we shall all share the Glory that awaits the Church. And the Glory of our dear Lord who loved us, and gave Himself for us, will be ours, and ours forever. I know that you put this great event far away and say that it is a long way off. But it is not, it is close at hand! Suppose it were not to come for a thousand years? Yet what is that but the twinkling of an eye, very soon over? The older men get, the shorter

time seems to be! When I was a child, a week seemed to be a very long time. You who have grown old know that a year seems to come and go before you are aware of it. You can say with Job, "My days are swifter than a runner: they flee away." Yet what matters it if we have to wait 50,000 years for our bliss? We who have believed in Christ have the absolute certainty that we shall, one day, stand in the midst of the splendor of Christ's wedding feast! The nuptials of a king are usually something very grand, but what will the marriage supper of the King of Kings and Lord of lords be—when He who is the Son of the Highest shall take to Himself His fit companion—when it shall no more be said of the Man, Christ Jesus, that there was found no help meet for Him, but when He shall take His Church, made out of His own flesh and shall welcome her unto Himself to go from Him no more forever?

I shall be a part of that Church and you who believe will be a part of that Church—*and we shall all have great honor in being called to such a future*. What bliss to be there! What joy to be there, not as spectators, but as part of the Bride that shall then be taken by her Husband! My Soul, you shall swim in happiness, you shall dive in seas of inconceivable delight by reason of your union with Christ and your delight in Him and His delight in you! I know no better idea of Heaven than to be eternally content with Christ and Christ to be eternally content with me! And all this will happen within a very little time. Therefore, lay aside your cares, dismiss your fears, murmur no more. Such a destiny awaits you that you may well be content.

I have heard that when Queen Elizabeth once carried the crown, while she was a young princess, she found it heavy as she bore it before her sister, but one said to her, "You will like it better when you wear it, yourself." So, we have to carry, every day, a weight for Christ, but oh, when the crown is put upon our own heads and we are in Paradise with Him, we shall forget the light afflictions which were but for a moment, as we enter into the enjoyment of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory! I want you, if you can, to enjoy yourselves while you think of the honor which is to be put upon all Christ's people in being married to Him—

"One with Jesus,
By eternal union, one,"

partakers of His name, His estate, His Glory, Himself! He shall make us to sit with Him upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and sits down with His Father upon His Throne.

Remember, too, we shall be blessed at the marriage supper because *no fear will mingle with our enjoyment*. It has been well observed that if men and women could know all that will happen to them in the course of their married life, they might, perhaps, not think a wedding day such a happy day, after all. So soon may love grow cold, so often may promises be broken and unkindness take the place of affection, that it is but a dubious joy that surrounds the wedding feast. But once with Jesus at the banquet above, there will be no such fear! Here, I may have a fear lest my love to Him should not be true, lest, after all, my following of Him should be but temporary and not the consequence of the new life within. But

once up there, we shall raise no more questions! We shall be exposed to no more dangers, we shall no more dread backsliding and apostasy. Once there, we shall be—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

Once there, every pain and tear and fear will have gone forever—that will be a glorious wedding feast, indeed!

My beloved Hearer, *will you be there*? If there were no Hell, the loss of Heaven would be Hell. If there were no Tophet, to have missed Christ's wedding feast were a Gehenna, black enough. If there were no worm that dies not and no fire that never can be quenched, this were damnation deep enough—to have missed the kisses of Christ's mouth and the joy of the everlasting oneness in His Glory. Do not miss it! I charge you, do not miss it. When some of us shall be flying through the gates of the New Jerusalem, I trust that we shall hear you as we pass by and, pausing for a moment to ask, "Who is there?" you will answer, "I am here, brought to know Christ by your ministry." That shall make another Heaven to add to our own Heaven! Everyone that we shall see there, converted by the preaching of the Cross by our lips, or through the printed sermons, shall multiply our bliss and make us yet happier—and forever and ever happier, still, in your happiness and joy!

I have finished my discourse, but I do not like, somehow, to go home with this thought in my mind—*perhaps some of you will miss this bliss!* The muster roll will be read, but your name will not be there! Can you bear that thought? Remember that if you are not blessed, you are *cursed*! If you find not Heaven, you are lost forever! You have often joined with God's people in singing—

"I love to meet among them now,
Before Your gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all!
But can I bear the piercing thought—
What if my name should be left out,
When You, for them, shall call?"

You cannot be left outside the wedding feast if you have trusted in Jesus! Then trust Him at once! Rest in that Lamb who will be your Bridegroom and at whose marriage supper you shall be present to praise the Glory of His Grace forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 18:20-24; 19:1-18.

May the Spirit of God take away the veil from our eyes while we read what was revealed to the beloved Apostle John! Here we have the prophecy of the destruction of the great anti-Christian system of Babylon, which, being interpreted, is and can be none other than the apostate Church of Rome!

Revelation 18:20-24. *Rejoice over her, you Heaven, and you holy Apostles and Prophets; for God has avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and*

shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in you; and no craftsman, of whatever craft he is, shall be found any more in you; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in you; and the light of a candle shall shine no more shine in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the great men of the earth; for by your sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of Prophets, and of saints, and of all who were slain upon the earth. Now, after the false church is put away, the true Church of Christ shines out in all her glory and purity!

Revelation 19:1-4. *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and Glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments for He has judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.* Heaven and earth are equally glad and they unite to adore the living God when the great apostasy—that has so long cursed the nations—is hurled into the sea!

5, 6. *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all you His servants, and you that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunder, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.* And His great power is never better seen than in crushing the powers of darkness and putting the hosts of evil to the rout.

7-10. *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See you do it not: I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* All worship, therefore, of saints and angels is a gross error, not to be tolerated for a moment! John was mistaken in falling down to worship the angel and he was speedily rebuked. And his mistake was quickly corrected. There is no doctrine that needs more to be preached, just now, than this message of the angel, "Worship God." Neither crosses, nor crucifixes, nor holy wafers, nor anything that can be seen or handled must be worshipped—"Worship God." We still need to hear God's mighty voice proclaiming from Mount Sinai the great Law. "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous

God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My Commandments."

11. *And I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon Him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war.* Behold your Savior, the Champion of the cause of truth! His war is not that of the carnal weapon and of garments rolled in blood. It is a *spiritual* warfare, but He wins a more glorious victory than ever sword or gun could gain.

12-14. *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.* All His true ones, all His faithful ones, all His saints, whether ministers or not—the heavenly armies—"followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Holiness is their armor, light is the panoply that they wear as they go forward to this holy war.

15. *And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword,* He puts down vice and evil of every kind, not with the sword of steel, but with His Word—"Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword"—

15, 16. *That with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* For this Son of God whom we worship, this Jesus of Nazareth, is Master of all! All power is in His hand. He is, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

17, 18. *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of Heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.* By this highly figurative language, we are to understand that when Christ goes forth to war in battling for the truth, and His true followers come after Him, their victory will be certain—and the slain of the Lord will be many! We look not for carnage and bloodshed to establish the Kingdom of Christ in the earth, but this Revelation gives us a picture of the utter overthrow and destruction of all forms of error through the power of the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ! Amen, so let it be!

Would God that the King of Kings would mount His white horse at once and that all His people would follow Him! He will do so at the right time and then the victory shall be unto God, and to the Truth of God, and to love, and to peace and holiness forevermore.

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.

CONVERTS, AND THEIR CONFESSION OF FAITH
NO. 2429

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1837.

"One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."
Isaiah 44:5.

THIS is to take place after the Lord has poured out His Spirit upon His people, and upon their offspring. The mainspring of everything good and gracious is the Holy Spirit. Where He comes, everything prospers. But when He has gone, nothing but failure and disaster will come. I believe that at this present moment God's people ought to cry to Him day and night that there may be a fresh baptism into the Holy Spirit. There are many things that are desirable for the Church of Christ, but one thing is absolutely necessary, and this is the one thing—the power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of His people. You know the very simple imagery which sets forth this blessing. If you go down to some of our Thames bridges, you will find the barges stuck fast in the mud and you cannot stir them. It would be a very difficult thing to provide machinery with which to move them—all the king's horses and all the king's men could not do it! But wait till the tide comes in! Now every black, heavy old barge "walks the waters like a thing of life!" Everything that can float is movable as soon as the silver flood has returned. So, many of our churches lie in the mud. Everything seems motionless, powerless—but when the Spirit of God comes in like a flood, all is altered! Therefore, let us pray—

"Come, Holy Spirit, come."

I know that, in one sense, He is always with us, but I am sure that, in another sense, He is not. He is abiding in this dispensation, but He is not with this Church or with that—and all the churches have need to cry, "Come, heavenly flood! Come with Your mighty force and lift us all out of our spiritual death!"

When the Spirit of God comes, converts come, too. If they do not come by the Spirit of God, they are not worth having. I have heard, and sorrowfully heard, of many instances where revivalists have added to churches by the score and by the hundreds, but after a couple of years none of the professed converts have been left. If men are brought to say, "I am the Lord's," merely as the result of *excitement,* they will generally be saying what is not true. And though they may think it true, yet time,

which tries all things, will prove their profession to have been untrue. We must have the Spirit of God with us for *real spiritual work* and if we have Him not, the most powerful revivalist will be only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal!

We must have the Spirit of God with us. If we have His Presence, even the ordinary minister's preaching will suffice for great blessing to the hearers. But without that Spirit, the ordinary preaching will become more dull and flat and lifeless than ever—and there will be no increase in the Church, and no earnestness among those already in it. I beseech you, therefore, pray day and night for the Spirit of God! We want to have sound doctrine, we want to have great diligence and zeal, we want to have superior holiness—I will not go on with the catalog of what we want—but let us have the Holy Spirit and we shall have all these! This will bring back to the Church and to the individual Believer all that is necessary for spiritual health and strength.

Now, supposing that we have had our prayers answered and that the Spirit of God has been poured out like floods upon the dry ground, then see what is to happen—converts will come forward to confess their faith! So the text evidently tells us.

In considering it, I would have you notice, first, that *this confession of faith is personal*—"One shall say, I am the Lord's," and so on. Secondly, *it is varied,* for, while there are some who say it, there are others who subscribe it with their hand. And, thirdly, while this profession is varied, *it is also very gracious*. There are wells of sweet water within this expression, "I am the Lord's." We shall try to draw some of the water out that we may drink and be refreshed.

I. Concerning the converts we so much desire to see and the confession which the Spirit of God will lead them to make, let me begin by saying that THIS CONFESSION OF FAITH IS PERSONAL—"*One* shall say, I am the Lord's; and *another* shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and *another* shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." You see, it is not a joint confession, but an individual one. It is "one," and, "another," and, "another."

Notice, first, that *all confession of Christ must be personal*—anything else is unreal and worthless. All religion that is true is *personal*—it has to do with the man's own heart. He is moved to it by his own conscience. His faith must be his own faith. His repentance must be repentance of his own sin. His coming to Christ must be his own coming to Christ. Nobody can perform your religion for you—it is not possible that anything like sponsorship should be admitted into real, vital godliness! Here is a man who professes that he promised that you should renounce all the pomps and vanities of this present wicked world. Who dares promise such a thing as that? If I were to promise for an unborn child that it would have red hair and a Roman nose, I would be quite as reasonable as if I promised that any child should become a child of God!

I cannot do it, it is not in my power, nor within the power of any man! In every act of religion you, yourself, must be concerned—the godliest

mother can pray for you, but you will not be saved unless you pray for yourself! The most believing father may use his faith on your behalf, but you will not be saved unless you, yourself, believe! It is useless for one man to think that he can either believe or repent for another. You are born, one by one—you will die one by one! You will have to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ in your own proper personality! You must, each one, humble yourselves before God, confess your sin and personally look to Him who was lifted up upon the Cross for our redemption—and personally yield yourselves up to God. Baptism of which you have no personal knowledge, in which you have no conscious part, is the mockery and mimicry of Baptism—but it is not Scriptural Baptism—and any profession of faith in which you have no conscious part, yourself, is the mimicry of a confession, but it is not a Scriptural confession!

"One shall say, I am the Lord's," but he would not speak for another! That other "shall call himself by the name of Jacob." And the two, together, cannot speak for number three, for he shall come forward and "subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." My dear Friends, I do charge you, understand that "you must be born again." You must yield your hearts to Jesus! And this must be a matter of personal concern with you. National religion and family religion may be well if rightly understood, but nothing less than *personal religion* will bring anyone into the Kingdom of Heaven!

This, then, is required of us by the Lord, that our religion should be personal. The Gospel comes to us with its urgent call, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." To each convinced sinner who asks, "What must I do to be saved?" the Gospel says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." It invites you, my Friend, as much as if there were not another person in the world! And the Word of God, if it comes with power to your soul, will come as distinctly to you as if you were the only person in the whole universe! It must be so—nothing but distinct personality will do in religion—and especially in the confession that we make of our being the Lord's people.

This personal confession, dear Friends, *needs to be carefully attended to when there are many coming forward.* I always dread lest any of you should come into the Church in a crowd. I have often known persons brought into this Tabernacle by the crowd. They somehow mingled with the stream and they did not and they could not move out of it—they were caught up off their feet and carried in here! And, sometimes, there are seasons with Churches when individuals seem to be carried into a confession of faith because it is the fashion to do so—others are doing it, so they do the same! I pray you to be very careful about this matter! If your father, your mother, your brothers, or your sisters make a profession of religion, that is no reason why *you* should do so unless you can truthfully do it! If you have not repented of sin, do not say that you have done so! If you have not believed in Jesus, do not say that you have! Do not

think of coming forward merely because your friends are joining the Church. Act for yourselves!

One of the lessons I have constantly to teach you is that you are individually responsible to God and that it is absolutely necessary for you to exercise your own personal judgment about matters of faith and practice. There may be some who say, "Do what your priest tells you," but we have no priests, because we want all of you to be priests! You are to be a nation of priests. If you are God's people, you are to act before God for yourselves under the teaching of His Spirit given to you individually—and we beseech you to do this. Do not let custom, either good or bad, sway you, but as we charge you not to run with a multitude to do evil, so we exhort you not to run with the multitude professedly doing good when you are not doing it and when your practice does not go with your profession! In all times of revival, it is very necessary that this Truth of God should be taught.

But, next, this individual confession of your faith in Christ is *incumbent upon you especially when there are few coming forward*. I could say to myself, "If there is nobody in this village confessing Christ, then it is all the more urgent upon me that I should confess Him. If in the Church few have come to tell the pastor that they have found Christ by his means, if I have found the Savior, I will certainly go! I will let him see that he has not quite labored in vain. I will go for his sake. If there are few added to the Church, then I will go that the Church may not be discouraged in its Christian efforts." Oh, I like to have around me those who feel, "It is no consideration with me whether there are many or few! I have to act as before God on my own account. If there are few who do right, that is all the more reason why I should do it." One said to me, the other day, "My daughters go to such a place of worship because it is fashionable and," he added, "that seems to me a curious reason, for I go to another place because it is *not* fashionable."

I think that it is a grand thing to learn to be in the right with two or three. Some people say, "'Why, you are in such a small minority!" Yes, yes, but as a general rule, minorities are right. Up till now, the majority has never been on the side of Christ, the majority has never been for God, the majority has never been with the Truth of God! Oh, dear young fellows, I cannot bear that you should always be trying to jump the way the cat goes! Go the *right* way—never mind about the cats! Do not be saying, "I must do what the other fellows do," but be bold and do exactly what the others do *not* do when you believe that is the right thing to do. What? Is heroism altogether gone? Will Christianity breed no more martyrs? I trust in God that it is not so, but that when there are few confessing Christ, and faith in Him, some of you men and women will feel, "I shall take up my cross and follow Christ and do it the more decidedly, and the more openly, and the more quickly because there are so few doing it."

If we do not mind what we are doing, we may go to Hell for the sake of company! But I would rather go to Heaven, alone, than go with all the

multitude down the road to Hell. Still are our Savior's words true, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it." Oh, that you may resolve that the way shall not be too narrow and the gate shall not be too strait for you and that, by God's Grace, you will find it, and love it none the less, but all the more because the multitude prefer the broader road!

II. Secondly, THIS CONFESSION IS VARIED.

First, one person speaks out for himself—"*One shall say, I am the Lord's.*" That is a fine speech! Truthfully made, it is like a clean cut piece of marble! "I am the Lord's." If you, from your very soul, can say this in any company and not be ashamed to say it before men, angels, or devils, God has taught you a noble piece of eloquence! "I am the Lord's." There is a great fullness about these words, as I will try to show you, directly, but there are some Christians who have made this distinct avowal and they stand to it. Perhaps they have not joined a Church yet—they should do so, but they have done well to say, "I am the Lord's." Paul said of the Macedonian Christians, "This they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God." You have no right to belong to a Church till first you belong to the Lord—so that you can truly say, "I am the Lord's." But it is most blessed when a man or a woman feels this, and says this, and keeps to it till death—"I am the Lord's." This is a noble avowal. I pray God that you may be enabled, now, to make it for the first time if you have never made it before.

The next person mentioned in our text confessed his faith in a different way, for he called himself by the name of Jacob. That is to say, *he took up his position with the people of God under their lowliest title*. "There," he said, "I am prepared to suffer affliction with the people of God, to be reproached when they are reproached, to be shunned when they are shunned, to be ridiculed when they are ridiculed. I belong to Jacob! He is an extraordinary person, cut off from the rest of the world to be the Lord's and I go with him." It is a grand thing when, first of all, a man knows he is the Lord's, but in some persons, this confession takes more prominently the shape of feeling that they will be with the people of God, that they are willing to take up their cross and go with God's people wherever they go. Their resolution is something like that brave declaration of Ruth to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people and your God my God."

I remember speaking with a Christian woman who lay dying. She was under some form of doubt at the time, but she said, "I feel sure that the Lord will never send me among the ungodly, for my tastes and habits do not lie that way. I have always been happiest among the people of God and, surely, the Lord will let me be gathered to my own company." And so He will. There is a story told—I believe a true one—of a poor woman who had long been a Believer, but, partly through aberration of mind, I think, she grew so despondent that nobody could cheer her. Before she died, she came out into bright light, but for a long time she was under a cloud and her belief was that she would be sent to Hell. She feared such

a doom above all things, but she prayed this very singular prayer, that, although she must suffer for her sins, she might have a place by herself where she might not hear the blasphemies of the wicked against God. She seemed as if she was not afraid of any form of suffering, but she said that she could not bear to hear God's name blasphemed! Dear Soul, there was no fear about her safety, was there? Where there is that holy dread of sin, that hatred of evil, that real love to God, there is no fear whatever of what will become of such people!

Now, there are some who, at first, are afraid that they do not belong to the Lord, but they say that they will belong to His people. They wish, somehow or other, to get in among them and especially when they see them despised. Then they come forward and stand up for them, and say, "On me, also, let the reproach fall, for I, also, am one of them." This is a grand spirit. I commend it heartily!

But here is a third person who makes *his* confession in a still different way—"Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." I do not know this person. Sometimes I think that he is a friend of mine *who is afraid to speak, but who likes to write*. "I could not," says one, "speak my confession of faith, but I could joyfully sit down and write it." Yes, you are timid, trembling and slow of speech. Do not condemn yourself for that. I have heard of one who came before the Church and could not speak a word—and when the pastor asked her some questions and almost put the answers into her mouth, she could say nothing. So he was obliged to say, "My dear Sister, the Church cannot judge at all as to your faith, for you say nothing." And then she broke the silence by exclaiming, "I cannot speak for Christ, but I could die for Him." "Oh!" said the minister, "that is the best confession of all!" There are some of that sort who would not be able to speak in public, being so timid and retiring, but they subscribe with their hand unto the Lord.

Still, I am not sure that this is the person mentioned in the text. I seem to fancy that it is a stronger body, a man who is *not content with saying it, but who writes it down in black and white*—"I am the Lord's." That which is written remains, so he puts it down. I have known such people to write out and sign a declaration that they belong to Christ. If they add any promises to that declaration, I am afraid that they will bring themselves into bondage. But if this is all, that they distinctly declare that the transaction is done, and that they belong to God, I think that it is a very admirable way of confessing faith in Him. Possibly, I may be addressing some young people who have done this. Let them be thankful that they have been enabled to make such a declaration of their faith and let them stand to it and abide by it all their days!

But you will notice, also, that this person who thus subscribed, or wrote with his hand, unto the Lord, also *went the whole way towards God and His people at their best*, for it is added that he surnamed himself by the name of Israel. Let me put this matter very plainly to you. I believe that there are some who give themselves up to the Church of God in a

very complete and unreserved manner, resolving that all the *privileges* they can enjoy they will have, all the *holiness* they can ever attain to they will gain, and all the *consecration* that lies within the region of possibility they will strive after and secure. They surname themselves by the name of Israel—they not only join God's people at their worst, but they mean to join them at their best. Not only do they take the name of Jacob, but the name of Israel, also!

There are certain persons who have joined this Church—I shall not indicate them, but you must know who they are—they are those who, when they joined the Church, joined it with all their heart and threw their whole soul into it. They give their time, their substance, themselves, to the cause of God for the Glory of Christ. On the other hand, there are some who join the Church and we have the distinguished privilege of having their names in our books, but that is all, for they do *nothing* for Christ. They are a worry to us rather than a help. They are the very first persons to find fault if they do not derive benefit. But as for the Church's service, they cannot answer to their names when the roll is read, for they are not here—they are busy in the world and their whole strength is *there*—they do not surname themselves by the name of Israel!

Happy is the Church when the Lord sends into her midst men and women who are so completely the Lord's that they give themselves up heart and soul to His service. Years ago, when farming used to pay, I have known farmers have a farm which they worked, themselves, and then they had another at a distance which they called their off-hand farm, out of which they did not get very much. So I believe that there are some people whose religion is a sort of off-hand farm—they do not get much out of it, nor do much with it—but their worldly business is their home farm which they work with all their might. The other matter is of secondary importance to them. Such people are not likely to be very happy in the Lord, themselves, and they are not likely to be made useful to others.

I think that I have thus shown you that there are varied ways of making this confession of faith. With some, it is a distinct avowal of their union with the Lord, Himself. With others it is mainly a sense of their union with the Church. With others it is a blending of the two and a carrying of both to a high degree of perfection. God give us many converts of this last sort!

III. I was going to finish with this observation, that THESE CONFESSIONS OF FAITH ARE ALL GRACIOUS, but I can only deal with one, for our time has gone—"I am the Lord's."

I wish that I could convey to others the feelings which I have had in thinking over these words. They had been with me many days before I ventured to think of preaching from them—"I am the Lord's." You know the order in which they come elsewhere. "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." "I am His," follows, "my Beloved is mine." *You must have Christ before you say that you belong to Christ.* Beloved, have you taken hold on

Christ? Have you appropriated Him? Is He your all, your everything? Is it so? Well then, you should go on to say, "I am the Lord's."

This declaration, "I am the Lord's," *is a very practical confession,* for, if I am the Lord's, then I must not give myself up to be the slave of another. I must not serve the world, the flesh, or the devil, for, "I am the Lord's." If the Lord has bought me, if the Lord has chosen me, if the Lord has called me, if the Lord has taken me to be His peculiar portion, I must be reserved for Him and not given to another. This ought to be a check to me in my whole daily life, if I am tempted to do this or that which is wrong.

It will be also *a high incentive to duty to say truly*, "I am the Lord's." I must live for Him; I cannot merely talk about being His, I must prove it to be so in private by my walking with Him and in public by my walking like He. If I am the Lord's, I must lay myself out to extend His Kingdom and win the souls of others to His sway. I must be zealous for my Lord—it must not be one step today and another tomorrow, for "I am the Lord's." I must not be idling and trifling, for "I am the Lord's." If this Truth shall come with power to your hearts, it will tend to make earnest workers of you, such servants as need not be ashamed even in the day of their Lord's appearing.

But while it has a practical bearing, *this confession has a sweet comforting aspect*—"I am the Lord's." The devil desires to have me, but, "I am the Lord's," so he cannot have me. Sin would have me, but, "I am the Lord's," and He has forgiven me and delivered me from the guilt of sin. I might fall a thousand times a day, but, "I am the Lord's." I might fall foully but not finally, for, "I am the Lord's"—and being the Lord's, He holds me in His hands and none shall pluck me from His gracious grasp!

"I am the Lord's." This is *my hope of safety and of perfection.* If I am the Lord's, then He has begun a good work in me and He will not leave off till He has performed all that He purposed concerning me! He will have respect to the work of His hands. I have heard that when Gustave Dore left Paris, before the siege, he hid one of his most beautiful pictures under a heap of stones in a cellar. Only he knew where it was and, when the siege was over, Dore hastened to the place, for he had a respect to the work of his hands, and though his picture lay hidden there, you may be sure that he soon disinterred it and completed it. And, sometimes, the Lord's people seem to get down under the stones in the cellar, but He will find them. If you are the Lord's, He will not leave you to perish! He will go on with His work and finish the task He has commenced till you shall reflect His wisdom and display His power!

"I am the Lord's." Why, I think I will turn this confession into a hymn! I will not rhyme it, but let it stand as it is, "I am the Lord's." Sing it in your souls! Let the joy bells of your heart ring it out, "I am the Lord's. I shall die in the Lord, I shall rise again at the sounding of the archangel's trumpet, I shall see my Lord's face in Glory, I shall be forever with Him, for I am the Lord's." If you come to the Communion Table with this sweet reflection in your hearts, and then go from the table with this Truth of God worked out practically in your lives, it shall be well with you!

My dear Hearers, I wish you could all say, "I am the Lord's." I would to God you would all put your trust in Christ and take Him to be yours. When you have done that, then do not hesitate to come and confess Him before men! God help you to do, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 44.

In this chapter God encourages His Church by a promise of the visitation of His Spirit. Oh, that it may be fulfilled to us, also!

Verses 1-3. *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. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring:* That is exactly what we need! Oh, that God would thus revive His Church! A little while ago you saw the earth become dry and brown and bare—the very pastures were chapped and parched and opened their mouths to cry for rain. What could we have done if the clouds had still withheld their nourishment? But at last, down came the refreshing showers and all the face of nature was revived! What we have had upon our fields, we need upon our Churches! Nothing will do for our souls but a visitation of the Spirit. Let us pray for it. Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Rain, pour out Your life-giving treasures upon thirsty souls even as the floods have been poured out upon the dry ground! Here is a Divine promise, let us plead it—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed and My blessing upon your offspring."

4. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* You must often have noticed how you can trace the course of a brook by the willow trees that grow upon its banks. When you cannot see the brook from a distance, you can see the willows. So, wherever the Spirit of God comes, young people are converted—we see our children growing up in God's fear—and we know that this is the result of the Spirit's working.

5, 6. *One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His redeemer, the LORD of hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God.* This is spoken in the Lord's usual majestic style—does it not remind you of the words of our Lord Jesus as recorded in the Book of the Revelation? "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." How can He be less than Divine who rightly adopts the same style which Jehovah uses in the Prophets—"I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God"?

7. *And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.* The great God challenges all pretended gods to compete with Him and to show that they have ever prophesied or foretold the future! One of the greatest proofs of the Inspiration of Scripture and that our God is the only living and true God, is that the prophecies up to now have been literally fulfilled. Go to Bashan, or to Edom, or to Sidon, or to Egypt—and wherever you go, you will see that whatever the Lord said concerning the ancient nations and peoples and cities has been carried out to the very letter!

8. *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.* "There is no God" in the world but Jehovah, the one living and true God whom we adore! Now follows that very wonderful passage descriptive of the making of idols, which we have often read. If there are any of you who worship crosses, crucifixes, or any other visible objects, please remember that God's command is spoken as much to you as to any other idolaters! We may not worship anything that can be seen or handled, for this is the Law laid down by God Himself—"You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them." Here, then, is God's description of idol gods.

9. *They that make an engraved image are all of them, vanity.* They must be very empty-headed and foolish people, or they would not worship a thing which they have engraved with their own hands.

9. *And their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.* Idolaters are just as wooden and doltish as their idols, or else they would know better than to worship them.

10-12. *Who has formed a god, or molten engraved 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. The smith with the tongs both works in the coals, and fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms: yes, he is hungry, and his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint.* Here is a god-maker with his tongs, and his coals, and his hammers—yet this god-maker gets hungry and faint! Here comes another—

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 after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.* Fancy a god-maker with his rule and his line, his planes and his compasses! What fine irony there is here

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 forest is growing stuff to make gods with out of ash, and oak, and cedar, and cypress!

15. *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself.* He cuts up part of the tree for fuel, and warms himself with it!

15-17. *Yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread; yes, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it an engraved 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, even his engraved image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my god.* And have not we seen hundreds of persons adoring a doll, or a little picture said to be a likeness of the virgin, or something of that kind? Ah, me, that even under the garb of Christianity the lowest kind of idolatry should still be common among our fellow men! God grant that none of us may ever fall into this deadly evil!

18-20. *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.* As madmen will sometimes devour ashes, so surely men who worship things that they have made or bought must be mad—"He feeds on ashes."

20. *A deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?* If you shall worship the crucifix, or anything else that is visible, you are dishonoring yourself and you are breaking the Law of God! Remember that, "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." He will have no similitude. This He abhors with His whole heart and will hold no one guiltless who worships an idol of any kind! Even though the man has reverentially and sincerely bowed before it, he is transgressing against God! These are the false gods—now we shall read of the one true God

21. *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant: I have formed you.* "You have not formed Me, as these idolaters make their gods, but I have formed you."

21. *You are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me.* God does not forget His people. If you are trusting in Him, you may forget Him through your infirmity, but because of His infinite love, He will never forget you.

22. *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.* First He pardoned their sins and then He bade them return to Him. What a wonder of mercy this is—Free Grace removing sin and then the sweet constraints of gratitude drawing the forgiven sinner near his God!

23. *Sing, O you heavens, for the LORD has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.* Pardoned sin is enough to make even the rocks sing! Mountains, trees, forests and even the lower parts of the earth are made to echo with song when sin is blotted out!

24. *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He that formed you from the womb, I am the LORD that makes all things; that stretches forth the heavens alone; that spreads abroad the earth by Myself.* God does everything by His own unaided strength. With whom took He counsel when He formed the universe? Who instructed the Ever-Blessed when He made the heavens and the earth! He did it all by His own wisdom and power.

25. *That frustrates the tokens of the liars, and makes diviners mad: that turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish.* This is what He does to those who boast and think that they know better than He does. But simple hearts that will believe His Word shall know His will and shall grow wise unto salvation.

26-28. *That confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers; that says to Jerusalem, You shall be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, You shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that says to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up your rivers: that says of Cyrus, he is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, You shall be built; and to the temple, your foundation shall be laid.* This Book of the Prophet Isaiah was written long before the days of Cyrus, yet he is here mentioned by name, and the prophecy of what he would do is here given! We know how completely this prophecy was fulfilled and the Lord who uttered it, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is our God forever and ever! He shall be our Guide even unto death, blessed be His holy name! 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.

CHRISTIANS, AND THEIR COMMUNION WITH GOD
NO. 2430

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1887.

"Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD have we waited for You, the desire of our soul is for Your name, and for the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night; yes, by my spirit within me will I seek You early."
Isaiah 26:8, 9.

IT is something when a man truly knows that there is a God. Behind the doubt of the existence of God, many men shield themselves and permit themselves to indulge in iniquities of which they might be ashamed if they did not make a cloak of their atheism. I would have no man live doubting the existence of God—such a doubt cannot help him to live better—it may cause him to live much worse.

It is a great deal more, however, when men so think of God as to fear Him. We say, concerning criminals—it is customary to say in *legal* terms—"not having the fear of God before their eyes." There is a fear of God which, though it is a spirit of bondage, is, nevertheless, salutary, and works well for the common good. There are men, doubtless, who are restrained from excess of iniquity by the belief that God has judgments by which He can overthrow them and, that at the end they will have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will be a sad day for this world when that fear ceases to operate upon men!

But, Beloved, it is something infinitely higher and pertaining to quite a different sphere when we come truly to know God—when we have not merely a belief in His existence, but a distinct consciousness and realization of it—when we can speak of God, not as of some personage far away, but as of One with whom we are intimately acquainted, One who has been a Friend to us, One who has even communed with us as a man talks with his friend. Some of you cannot possibly reach to that point as you are, for God is a Spirit, and only spiritual men can discern Him—and as yet you are not partakers of the Spirit of God. Some of you here present are still carnally minded and the carnal mind cannot perceive spiritual things. Least of all can it perceive that highest spiritual object, the ever-blessed God! "You must be born again," for, "except a man is born again (from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God." We may set it out before your eyes in glorious light, but it is not light that the blind man needs, it is *eyes*! And eyes must be given to you who are spiritually blind if you are ever to see God. There is One who has come on purpose to open the eyes of the blind and if your eyes are opened by Him, then shall

you see God and truly begin to know Him! This spiritual vision makes a grave distinction between those who know God and those who do not know Him. And it is produced by a wondrous change called regeneration, in which darkness passes away and the true Light of God dawns upon the spirit.

I. Now, coming to our text, I shall have to say, first, that THERE IS, IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD, A PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNION WITH GOD.

For, first, *this is where their spiritual life begins*. "I will arise and go to my father," was the proof that the prodigal was really restored in heart. When he cleansed himself, touched himself up and joined himself to a citizen of that country and began to work instead of wasting his substance in riotous living, it was a considerable improvement. It is always a good thing for a man to work rather than to waste his time in the indulgence of his vices. But he had not, *then*, begun to live spiritually. It was when he remembered his father and the cry of his spirit was, "I will arise and go to my father," that the gracious work was begun in his soul!

Beloved, if any of you are seeking after righteousness by your own works, or by your prayers, I do not know that this is a token of a new life. It may be that you are even in the dark seeking after God if, perhaps, you may find Him there, but when there rises in your spirit this thought, "I must find God, I must come to God, I must confess my sin unto the Lord, I must lay myself at the Lord's feet, I must meet with Him," *then* we hope the best things for you! So long as you are content with ministers, priests, sacraments, books, prayers and all that *you can do*, you are satisfied with the mere shell! But when there awakens in your spirit this desire, "It is God whom I have offended; unto God will I make my confession. It is from God that I need pardon, oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come even to His seat." When there is formed within your spirit this resolve, "I will seek the Lord's face until He turns to me in love and accepts me as His child"—*then* it is that spiritual life begins. Your first true dealings with God, after a spiritual fashion, are infinitely more important than all the outward forms of religion, whatever they may be! I am not judging one form more than another, but, if you are content with the externals and do not come to the *internals.* If you do not come to close grips with God and humble yourself before Him, you know not, as yet, what spiritual life really means! This, then, is where spiritual life begins—with coming into communion with God.

And, Beloved, *this is where the life of the real Christian grows and makes advances*. We behold the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and that gives us hope. That gives us peace. That gives us rests and in proportion as we know more of God, as He reveals Himself in the Person of His dear Son, our Graces grow. Faith has for its meat and its drink the knowledge of God. Knowing Him, and His exceedingly great and precious promises, we come to rest in Him more fully. Ignorance is the enemy of faith, but a knowledge of God greatly strengthens and increases our confidence in Him. You do not grow in Grace, my Brothers and Sisters, by listening to fine oratory, even though it is of a sacred kind. The real growth comes to you when God the Holy Spirit, Himself, dwells with you. It is not when you have been so many minutes on your knees, or have

read so many chapters in the Bible, that you necessarily grow—it is when you have spoken with God, and God has spoken with you—when He who is the Alpha of your spiritual life is all the letters of it right up to the Omega! He has worked all our works in us, and without Him we can do nothing. He is the truly strong man who lives near to God. That man can do anything who throws Himself back on the all sufficiency of the Most High. Rest upon yourself, or trust in anything below the stars, and you will dwindle and decay. But rest in God, and come into close contact with the Divine Invisible—let your rock and refuge be His throne—and you will go from strength to strength by the power of God the Holy Spirit that shall dwell in you!

Next, beloved Friends, *it becomes to the Believer the tenor of his life to please God.* That is a beautiful testimony that is borne concerning Enoch—"Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." There are many who have not yet even *thought* of doing such a thing as this, and there are some who may have thought of it who, perhaps, have not yet attained to it. But what a blessed thing it is for a man to be brought to trust in the Lord Jesus and to seek the Glory of the Savior and to yield *his* will to *God's* will! And to feel that God is his All and in all that He does, he strives to please God! You know what it is to be pleased with your child and pleased with what he has done. It is not perfect—from your standpoint you can see many imperfections—but still, it is most acceptable as coming from your child. He has done it with all his heart and you are well pleased with him.

Well now, that should be the tenor, and it *is* the tenor of the life of every man who has really been renewed in the spirit of his mind by the work of the Spirit of God! Jesus could truly say of His Father, "I always do those things that please Him." And in proportion as we grow like Jesus, this becomes a true description of our lives—they are well pleasing unto God. What a contrast there is between the man who pleases God and the ungodly man! The ungodly man does what pleases himself, or what pleases his wife, or what will please his neighbors. But the Christian man, although he is willing to please his neighbor for his good to edification, yet aims *first* at this mark—not to please men, but to please God. This makes his life altogether different from the life of the man who has not God in all his thoughts.

Again, Beloved, *this principle of communion with God becomes the very flower of our lives.* When are we happiest? There is no room for question here—every Believer knows that he is happiest when nearest to his God. I hope that for the most part we enjoy such full communion with God that our peace is like a river. But there *are* times of great tidal waves of fellowship when we get nearer to God than at other seasons. We have our Tabors and our transfiguration glories. We can sometimes say, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, we cannot tell: God knows." And we then know nothing else but God—we seem wrapped up in Him! I am not speaking of any mysticism, although it does happen that among the mystical writers this experience is most often spoken of. This is a joy which belongs to all Believers when they enter into the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

The Christian man is not at his best when he is healthiest, or when he is wealthiest, or when he has been most successful, or when he has had the praise of men. No, the day in which the flower of his life has come to the climax of its beauty and pours out its sweetest perfumes—the day in which his life is life, life indeed, is when he is drinking in that loving kindness of God which is better, even, than life itself! See, then, as the worldling finds his highest enjoyment here or there, the Christian finds the summit of his joy in fellowship with his God!

I must not leave this point till I have said one other thing about this principle of communion with God—*this is the hunger and this is the thirst of the Christian*. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." To get near to God is the great passion of our spirit. To accomplish this to the fullest, we would face grim Death in his den! Yes, sometimes we could almost use the extravagant language of Rutherford, when he declared that if God were on the other side, to get at Him he would swim through seven Hells, for nothing can keep back the impetuosity of a heart that is all aflame with love to God and feels that all its Heaven lies in communion with Him!

Well now, dear Friends, if you and I are conscious that this is true, that there is in us a principle of fellowship with God, then notice that *this proves that there has been a Divine renewal worked in us*. It was not so once. Alas, it was very much otherwise! If news could have been truly proclaimed that God was dead, some of you would have been very happy to hear it, for you would have been no more worried with thoughts of eternity and of the Day of Judgement! But now, what an awful thing it would be for you if, even for a moment, you indulged the thought that there was no God! Why, you would have lost everything! All joy would have vanished from you in an instant if God were not real to you! Then what a change is this, a radical change, one which could only have been worked by supernatural power—as great a change as when the dead rise from their corruption and come forth into newness of life!

This proves your sonship, too, for no man cries after God and longs for fellowship with Him, except it is upon the principle of, "Abba, Father." Slaves do not crave the presence of their masters! It is *sons* who long to be with their father. You are a true son of the Highest if you hunger and thirst after God!

This proves your holiness, too, in a measure, for like will to like and if your heart pants after God, you have been made a partaker of the Divine Nature so far, at least, that you are now striving after holiness, or else I am sure you would not be seeking after God. Unholy hearts feel a repulsion to the holy God and seek to fly from Him. But the holy soul longs for communion with the holy God. That is a clear proof that you have had implanted within you a spiritual nature! There is within you, now, a new heart and a right spirit! You have passed into the higher life. You have become a spiritual man, otherwise you would not long for this spiritual God!

This proves your heavenliness, too, for that same desire which draws you to God is drawing you to Heaven. What is Heaven but to be with God? And He who now is drawing you with cords of a man and with

bands of love, to His own glorious self, is by that very process drawing you towards the place where He reveals His face! And He is also making you fit for that Beatific Vision which shall be your everlasting happiness!

II. Now, secondly—and I must be brief on many points here—THIS PRINCIPLE DISPLAYS ITSELF AND WORKS IN VARIOUS WAYS.

Begin the text—"Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You." We are longing for God and it is dark and cloudy—what shall we do? Why, *wait for Him.* Instead of impatiently complaining of His Providential dispensations which would be flying off at a tangent from Him, we stand still that we may see the salvation of God! We have come to our Red Sea and we can go no farther. And now our love to God, our fellowship with Him makes us just abide where we are until He says, "Go forward." And then we march through the sea, dry-shod. Waiting is often a very heavenly experience. You will find it a difficult thing to do if you doubt. He that doubts, hurries and worries, but he that believes does not make haste through cowardly fear! He waits and sings to himself, "My Soul, wait you only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."

This waiting is expectation. It means, "I cannot see the way out of this difficulty, but I *shall* see it. I do not yet perceive God's plan for my deliverance. but I *shall* be delivered. I do not know how bread shall be given me, but I *shall* have it even if God has to send ravens with it, or to rend Heaven, itself, in two! I shall have His promises fulfilled and I will wait His time." This patiently waiting upon God is one of the blessed displays of a spirit that is at perfect peace with God and longs to keep in fellowship with Him.

"Yes," says the text, "in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You." Sometimes, the way of God's judgments may mean the appointed way, the regular way. I believe that God's people love prayer because it is one of the ways in which God meets with them. You love the House of Prayer and the hearing of the Gospel because it is in the sanctuary and in the preaching of the Gospel that God has often met with you. We have had many happy Sabbaths, here, and on these little Sabbaths in the middle of the week, as I often call our Thursday night services, the Lord has manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world and we have waited for Him expecting to meet Him in His house. These Believers waited upon God until the ordained time for deliverance from His judgments. Perhaps the husband or the child was dead, or, possibly, the judgments were of another kind. Famine desolated the land—the water in the brooks was dried up. Enemies were all over the country ravaging with their sword and their bow—blood flowed freely and then God's servants waited for God. They expected that He would come at such a time of need and display Himself in some unusual manner. My Brother, my Sister, whenever you have a great trouble, expect a great mercy! You will find it the path of wisdom when you have a great joy, to be afraid, but when you have a great sorrow, then have a high anticipation of blessing! That big wave is washing up some jewel that lay deep down at the bottom of the sea—it would never have come to your feet if it had not been for the storm that washed it where you can now find it!

Sometimes the Lord comes with spiritual judgments to His people. He blights and blasts and withers all their hopes and they are ready to despair. Yet they must not despair, but each one must say, "Lord, show me why You contend with me. Now come in and deal with me in mercy. When You have stripped me, when You have scourged me, yes, when You have slain me, then come and fulfill Your Word, 'Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.'" Beloved, see what it is to wait upon God in His judgments! You know how hypocrites do—they wait upon God, cap in hand, while His service *pays* them—but as soon as ever the Lord begins to try them, or somebody laughs at them, or their religion seems to injure their business, then good-bye to religion! But they are the true men who can truthfully say, "In the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You."

You can tell a good dog when you see him follow his master. Though somebody who wants to steal him offers him a dainty bone, he will have nothing to do with him, but he will keep close to his master's heels. And the true Believer follows God when he seems to get nothing by it—even when he appears to be a loser by it. He loves not God with a cupboard love, for what he gets from Him in this world, but with a child's love, which says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." So, you see, this communion with God leads to waiting for Him.

Sometimes we do not seem as if we could get quite as far as that, and then *this communion leads to desiring*—"The desire of our soul is to Your name." We want to know the Character of God which is set forth in His name. We love that Character! We desire to have it and to reflect it in our own lives. Our desire is to God's name which signifies not only His Character, but His honor and His Glory. We desire to see Him glorified! Our heart is glad when Christ is glorified and our spirit is sad when His name is dishonored.

Surely, this name means the Word of God, for the Word of God is God's name written large, and we have a desire towards God's Word! O Beloved, the longer one lives upon God's Word, the more he feels that he cannot endure anything which is other than God's Word! There is a great difference between the largest words of men and the very smallest words of God, if such there are. I have heard of a certain Divine who preached a sermon and afterwards asked an aged man what he thought of it. This was a very foolish thing for him to do. The old man answered, "Well, I have not much to say." "But," enquired the minister, "did you not think that there were capital divisions and wonderful distinctions in the sermon?" He said, "Yes; but there was one distinction you seemed to me to forget in your sermon." "What was that?" "The distinction between meat and bone—you gave us a large quantity of bone, but I did not perceive that I had any meat—and there is a vast distinction there." When a man once gets to feed upon the Word of God, all the rest is bones, and he lets the dogs have them. But as for himself, he needs spiritual meat and he must have it! Cannot many of you say that you desire to know the Character of God and to reflect it—that you desire to spread the Glory of God and that you desire to feed upon the Word of God? Your desire is to His name!

And, once more, your desire is to *remember the Lord*—"And to the remembrance of You." I wish that I had a memory that was so narrow that it could only hold the things of God! Do you not sometimes find that if you hear a bad thing, it sticks in your memory? Oh, what an abominable memory that is which lays hold of all the draft of Sodom and cannot get rid of it, while the timbers that come floating down from Lebanon are often allowed to go by! But our desire is to the remembrance of God—I am sure that it is. Oh, that I did always remember Him when I wake and until I sleep—and in my dreams still remember Him and if I wake in the night be still with Him! This is what we want! Our fellowship with God is such that if we do not always remember Him, yet our desire is still towards the remembrance of Him, and we desire to see repeated what we remember of Him. If He has drawn us a thousand times, we desire that He would draw us yet again. And for the great world and the one Church of Christ in it, our cry is, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are You not He that has cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" Our desire is that we might see Him again as we have seen Him in the sanctuary—and see Him as His goings were of old when He showed Himself mighty in the deliverance of His people! I, for one, can say that my soul desires this beyond *anything*. Oh, that He would do, again, what He did in our fathers' days! He can do it and He will! This is the desire of His people. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, we beseech You!

Then, again, observe that this principle of communion shows itself *in a personal yearning*. Did you notice, as we read the chapter, that the eighth verse is in the plural and the ninth verse is in the singular? "Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name and to the remembrance of You. With *my* soul have I desired you in the night." O Brothers and Sisters, this lonely, personal desire of the Believer after God, is another form of fellowship with Him! Sometimes, we feel as if we were in the darkness of night, all alone—there is nobody to speak with us, or to speak for us. Then what a blessing it is if we can say, "With my soul have I desired You in the night"! Then have I needed no other candle for my darkened chamber, no other sun to make my day, but my Lord and His sweet Presence! I will not dwell on this experience because I think that many of you can say that it is so with you, also. It has been very dark with you. You have had a world of inward trouble, but still, above it all, there has been this desire after God, for you could not do without Him. You have said concerning your choicest earthly comforts—

"If you should take them all away,
Yet would I not repine.
If you, my God, will but come to me,
Let them all go, for I have all
I need when I have Thee."

This principle of communion takes one other form, that of personal seeking—"Yes, with my spirit within me will I seek You early"—seek You with my spirit, not with lip-service or head-service, but with heart-service, with my spirit within me! There is a great deal to be done indoors, Brothers and Sisters, and there are some who are so busy outside

that they do not attend to anything inside. But it is a blessed thing when the soul in its inward parts is all alive in seeking after God—"With my spirit within me will I seek You." And notice that it is, "I will seek You *early*." I will be out on time. I will waste not a moment, I will not delay. I will seek You and I will seek You now.

I have a wish springing up in my heart that some here present would begin to seek the Lord now. But if any of you have sought Him and have known Him and you have lost communion with Him, seek the renewal of that communion at once! Do not think that it will take weeks for you to get back where you once were. Conversion may take place in a second of time and so may restoration! It is not always so—it may be a long process—but it is sometimes very speedy. "Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." I think that some of us have known what it is to feel as dull and stupid as a silly sheep. But while we have been in the House of God, or while we have been alone, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord has visited us and we have taken the wings of eagles and have been up and away! And we wondered what had happened to us, for we had been turned from a deadly state into one of life and vigor!

Listen to this text and see how short a business this heart-reviving is. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What is needed? "If any man hears My voice and opens the door." It does not take long to open a door, does it? Yet that is all Christ asks of us! He does not say, "If anybody sweeps the house and gets the supper ready, I will come and partake of it." No, but, "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." Dear Heart, you know your Lord—you know His voice and the very sound of His fingers on the door! Open to Him! Say, "Come in, my Lord. If I have kept You out, my Dearly-Beloved. If I have kept You out till Your head is wet with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night, I beg ten thousand pardons of You! Come in, I beseech You, and sup with me, that I also may sup with You." It can soon be done and I pray that it may be. At any rate, this is how God's child often has to cry—"Come to me, Lord! With my spirit within me will I seek You early."

Perhaps somebody says, "Well, I have been praying the Lord to come to me, but I have not at once had His company." How did you expect Him to come? "I thought I would be made glad," you say. Yes, but the Lord sometimes comes to His people and *humbles* them—and when your soul is humbled in the dust, it may be certain that the Lord is with you—quite as certain as if you were full of joy! Sometimes He comes to us with the spirit of chastisement and rebuke. Well, do not pick and choose—so long as He comes! Seek Him early, for He comes for your good and He will come and bless you.

III. I was to have said, thirdly, that THE LORD TAKES PLEASURE IN THIS COMMUNION WITH HIS PEOPLE, but I must not detain you.

I will just point out that the next to the last verse in this chapter shows how the Lord loves the fellowship of His people. He invites them to commune with Him—"Come, My people." He points out the way to fellowship—"Enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about you." That is, get alone with your God. Then He provides for this communion—

Christ is our hiding place and He, Himself comes to meet us—"Come My people." I invite you, Beloved, tonight if you can, or as soon as you can, to have a special season given up to nothing else but fellowship with God, that you may now begin, again, a fellowship which afterwards shall not easily be broken. Pray! If you feel that you cannot pray, read. Let God speak to you. Get into conversation with Him, somehow. A conversation, you know, needs two to engage in it. Hear what God says to you, read a passage from His Word. And then pray. If you find you cannot pray, praise! Say something to Him and then read, again, and let Him speak to you. But come not away until He has spoken to you and you have very distinctly spoken with Him. Let this be the burden of your prayer, "Lord, I want to come to You; I want, through Jesus Christ, my Mediator, to have fellowship with You, and to abide in Him in nearness to You." May the Lord help you in this matter, for truly there is no life like it!

I wish that I could invite all here present to such a life as that, but there is, as I have told you before, the previous step. There *must be the new birth*—there must be faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel which we have continually to preach to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." And then you shall know that there is a God! Then you shall have fellowship with God and then your life shall be, in its measure, like the life of those in Heaven who behold the Lord's face and serve Him day and night in His Temple.

May the Lord bless these words to all of us, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 26.

Verse 1. *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah.* God would have His people to be a singing people! They often sigh—they should more often sing. God makes their songs and appoints the song for the day, and so helps them to cheer the darkest day with some melodious music.

1. *We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.* Jerusalem may fall, her walls may be destroyed till not one stone is left upon another, but still, "we have a strong city." In the salvation of God we live and are safe. Our place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. The eternal purposes of God shall guard the safety of His people.

2. *Open you the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the Truth of God may enter in.* This city is for the righteous, for those who keep the Truth of God. They are to dwell in this city—not fighting in the open, not wandering in the plains—but dwelling at ease behind the massive walls and bulwarks which God Himself has appointed in His salvation.

3. *You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.* This is our city. By faith, we enter into the purposes and promises of God and there we dwell in perfect peace! The adversary may thunder outside the walls, but what of that? He may threaten that He will capture the city, but how can he do so when the Lord is there? This is a sweet, sweet verse—may you all get the very mar-

row of it! "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You."

4. *Trust you in the LORD forever.* Not sometimes, but always. Not for a certain number of days during your season of trial, but if the trial should last a lifetime, "trust you in the Lord forever."

4. *For in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.* If He could fail you, you would do well to be looking out for another shelter. But since His strength is everlasting, let your faith also be everlasting. Lives there a man who has fully trusted in God and yet has been confused? Is there one *anywhere* who has really relied upon the invisible power of Jehovah and yet has found Him fail in the hour of need? It cannot and it shall not be!

5, 6. *For He brings down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He lays it low; He lays it low, even to the ground; He brings it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.* This is always God's way—overturning the great and the proud and casting down the mighty works of men, so that he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm soon finds himself in a pitiful condition. All the proud, who glory in their own power, shall be as when a city is battered down and the very dust is trodden by "the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy."

7. *The way of the just is uprightness: You, Most Upright, do weigh the path of the just.* God makes a plain path for His own people and He, knowing their way, forms a right estimate of it. Let them never fear for a moment that He will condemn them because of the condemnation of their fellow men! He takes care, Himself, to weigh the path of the just and His scales cannot err.

8, 9. *Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name, and to the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night; yes, with my spirit within and will I seek You early: for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* You notice that the song given to us in this chapter is all concerning God. We are bid to trust in Him, we are told how safe are they that do so, we are shown how futile is all strength apart from Him and now the desire of His saints is set forth as being toward Him, and toward Him alone.

10. *Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.* Until men are changed in heart, and renewed in nature, they will not see God. If you could transport them to the land of uprightness, where there would be no sin to tempt them, yet even *then* they would not know the Lord! Still is our Savior's message true, "You must be born again." O unconverted men and women, we look upon you through our tears because you are incapable of everything that is good and right until the Lord, in Covenant mercy, renews your hearts and brings you to know Him! Of the ungodly man it is truly declared, "In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord."

11. *LORD, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yes, the fire of Your enemies shall devour them.* There are some people who will not see and, as the old proverb has it, there are none so blind as those that will not see. But they will one day be *made* to see, if not to their salvation, then to their everlasting shame and confusion! They shall be made to see that, after all, there is a God and that He is strong to punish the ungodly, and to overthrow His adversaries! I pray that no one of you may refuse to see by the light of the Gospel until he is forced to see by the blaze of the Judgment Day. Yet, alas, there will be such!

12. *LORD, You will ordain peace for us: for You have also worked all our works in us.* That is a delightful verse! An ordination is spoken of here, for God has ordained peace for His people and they must have it—and they shall have it! On the other hand, His people ordain glory for Him, for they declare, "You have also worked all our works in us." Thus we also sing—

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

13. *O LORD our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name.* "O Lord, how sadly, how long, how grievously did those other lords domineer over us! But from this time forth we will know no name but Yours and, when we mention it, it shall be by Your Grace, and by Your power, alone, that we even put our trust in Your wondrous name!

14. *They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore have You visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.* Yes, our lusts are all dead! They will never live again, thank God! The Sword of the Spirit has slain them—"they are deceased." We want to have nothing more to do with them, we desire that the very memory of them should perish.

15. *You have increased the nation, O LORD, You have increased the nation: You are glorified.* God is always glorified in the increase of His people. Therefore we should, above all other reasons, pray for the increase of the Church because God will thereby be glorified.

15, 16. *You had removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. LORD, in trouble have they visited You, they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them.* That is true of hypocrites! But it is also sweetly true of some whom God is bringing to Himself. Child after child has died, loss after loss has broken down the business. Now they turn to God. Oh, it is a blessed loss that makes us find our God! What we gain is infinitely more than what we have lost. What a mercy that God is willing to hear us in the time of trouble, that all our putting off and rejection of Him do not make Him put us off! I remember one who wished to hire a horse and buggy to go to a certain town and he went to the place where he could hire it, and asked the price. He thought that it was too much, so he went round the town to other people and found that he could not get it any cheaper. But when he came back to the place first visited, the owner said to him, "Oh, no, no! I will not let my horses to you. You have been round

to everybody else, and now you come back to me because you cannot get what you want elsewhere. I will have nothing to do with you." That is *man's* way of dealing with his fellow man, but it is not the Lord's method of dealing with us! When you and I have gone round to everybody else, the Lord still welcomes us when we come back to Him! Yes, just as harbors of refuge are meant for ships in distress that would not have put in there except for the storm and danger, such is the mercy of the Lord God in Jesus Christ. If you are forced to accept it, you are still welcome to it! If you are driven to it by stress of weather, you may come in, for the harbor was made for just such as you are.

17, 18. *Like as a woman with child, that draws near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and cries out in her pangs, so have we been in Your sight O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not worked any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.* Ah, no, all the agonies of a mind, all the troubles of a soul cannot save it! This is the work of Grace. This is the gift of God! What a mercy it is that such a cheering promise as this next verse contains comes in just here

19. *Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.* That note of resurrection comes in as a word of comfort to the most dispirited, the most despairing. As the dead shall live because of Christ, even so is there hope for you who are driven to a very death of despair! You cannot live by your own power. Your hopes are all gone, dead and buried, and you lie helpless and lost—but as the Lord will raise the dead from their graves—so will He give you hope and bless and save you, if you come and trust in Him.

19-21. *Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, My people, enter into your chambers and shut your doors about you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For, behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.* The blood of the murdered shall cry to God from the ground, as did Abel's. The slain in battle shall not be forgotten. God will come and punish the earth for its iniquities. Blessed are they that hide themselves in Christ, till the indignations are past.

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 DOUBLE CLEANSING
NO. 2431

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1887.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." Zechariah 13:1, 2.

WHEN you read a letter, it is well to notice the date upon it—you may make mistakes if you do not. The promise in our text is dated, "In that day." If we look a little way back, we shall find, in the 10th verse of the 12th chapter, these words, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." When the soul learns to mourn before the Cross, then it shall perceive that there is cleansing from sin. If you have looked to Christ whom you have pierced and, if so looking, you have come to lament and loathe your sin, it is in *that* day that God reveals to you the fountain opened for your sin and for your uncleanness! Are any of you, here, broken down under a sense of sin? Then I am glad that I have such good news for you as my text contains. It is for sinners that Jesus bled and died! It is for you who are conscious of your great guiltiness that the fullness and the freeness of His Grace are manifested. If you are a sinner and Jesus is a Savior, you are well met. If, by faith, you will look to Him, it is a proof that He is looking to you, and He will take away your sin and you shall go your way taking with you a song of love and praise unto Him who has so graciously saved you! So, you see that where there is *mourning* for sin, there is *pardon* for sin! When the eyes are full of tears of repentance, they are most fit for looking to Christ who takes all our guilt away. God help every mourner, here, to rejoice in Christ Jesus and His great salvation!

According to my text, this cleansing from guilt and sin is followed by a reformation. There is a fountain opened, first, for the putting away of sin and uncleanness as to the past and present, and there follows upon this that God takes away the idols out of the land and even cuts off the very names and memory of them. God's flowers generally bloom double—and

when He gives us the flower of pardon, He gives us the flower of regeneration with it! He that is made clean is also made new! He that takes away the *guilt* of sin also takes away the *tendency* to sin. God will not forgive you and still leave you to be what you were before, but, forgiving you, He will make a great change in you, so that you shall no more love the ways and the wages of iniquity, but you shall become, henceforth, a lover of *holiness*—one who desires to follow the Lamb wherever He goes and to walk in His ways at all times.

I think there are some who will hear this message who will jump at such good tidings! They are saying in their hearts, "That is just what we want. We do not merely wish to be forgiven our old faults—we long to be made altogether holy. We desire to be set on the road to Heaven and to become pure in heart and holy in life." Well, this is just what God is prepared to do for you! And they who look to Christ shall see in the blood and water streaming from His riven side, the double cleansing that they crave—the blood to atone for guilt and the water to wash away the tendency towards future sin! These two things, of which I have spoken to you these many years, are what I have to speak about, again, at this time. But I do not want to merely speak about them and let it all end in talk. What is a mouthful of words worth? They will never feed the hunger of the soul. I want you to come to a *personal* dealing with God and to lay hold upon Christ and eternal life! I pray that you may find these two great things of which I have to speak—first, the cleansing from uncleanness, and then, afterwards, the cleansing of the life. So will you receive a gracious answer to the prayer with which we began our service—

"Plenteous Grace with You is found,
Grace to cover all my sin.
Let the healing streams abound,
Make and keep me pure within.
You of life the Fountain are,
Freely let me take of Thee
Spring You up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity!"

I. To begin with the first cleansing—I will keep to the words of the text, for there are no words like the words of God—and the words of the text are the best part of the sermon. This, then, is the first head of my discourse, A CLEANSING FOUNTAIN OPENED. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

In the first place, *uncleanness is, in itself, a loathsome, foul thing*. It used to be thought, in the Church of Rome, I believe, that if a person never washed himself, he might acquire the odor of sanctity and become a great saint. We believe no such thing! We fancy that cleanliness is the next thing to godliness and, somehow, we loathe to be put into association with people who abhor cold water and never wash themselves. Personal uncleanness is a disgusting thing and those who work very much

among the depraved find it one of the hardest parts of their work, to have to put up with filthiness and uncleanness. Well now, that uncleanness of body is a picture of what uncleanness of soul is—a sinner is disgusting to God. Notwithstanding all the love that He has towards men and His desire to bless them, yet sin is a thing which the soul of God abhors! All unrighteousness is most obnoxious to Him. The doing of wrong is a thing which God cannot endure. He reckons it to be a filthy, loathsome, horrible thing. He says to the ungodly, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." He cannot endure sin—it is contrary to His holy Nature—it revolts Him. This is how the Lord sets forth sin to us—it is uncleanness in His sight.

Dear Friends, I would not wonder if we feel that as sin is a filthy thing to the eyes of God, and He loathes it, *we look upon ourselves as filthy beings and we loathe ourselves*. It is a good sign of the working of Divine Grace in the heart when a man begins to feel himself filthy—when he says, "I cannot rest till I am washed. I cannot endure this uncleanness any longer. Time was when I was willing, even, to wallow in sin, but something has happened to me that has awakened up my conscience and touched my heart—and I cannot bear to remain as I am. Lord, wash me! Wash me! Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." You are in a good way, my dear Friend, when you begin to feel obnoxious to yourself, even as your sin has made you to be obnoxious to God! Self-loathing is one of the early stages of helpful spiritual life. I remember when I would have given all the world if I had possessed it, to escape from myself—when, as I remembered my sin, I wished I could have ceased to be that I might have escaped from all my past iniquities and from the sin that I felt sure would, in the future, come out of me while the fountain within was so foul and polluted! I pray God that everyone I am now addressing who has never been washed in the open fountain may be made to be loathsome to himself, even as his sin makes him loathsome to God!

You remember, beloved Friends, that in the Tabernacle of old, between the tent of the congregation and the altar, was a laver where the priests might wash themselves before they offered sacrifice to God. In Solomon's Temple there was a molten sea, with ten lavers of brass, because God would not have anybody present himself unclean in His House of Prayer. So, our text first represents us as *being by nature* unclean and, therefore, *we need washing*. We cannot go into God's Holy Place and have fellowship with Him as we are. Do you think that God can speak with you as you are? Can He have commerce with sin? Can He wink at iniquity? Can He tolerate that which His Justice must condemn? Ah, no! As the unclean man, under the Jewish Law, was cut off from all fellowship with the worshippers of God, so is every sinner at a distance from God until he has been washed! I wish you would look at yourself, my dear Hearer. Unless you are washed in the blood of the Lamb, you must be regarded

as out of fellowship with God, shut out from His Presence, under His ban, unable to draw near to God while your filthiness is upon you! This makes uncleanness a very dreadful thing—it is loathsome to God and loathsome to ourselves—and makes us unable to have fellowship with the thrice-holy Jehovah!

At the same time, under the Law of God, *an unclean person defiled all that he did*. Wherever he went, he polluted everything. If he sat on a chair, it became defiled. If he drank out of certain vessels, they had to be broken. If he touched other people, he spread the defilement wherever he went while he was, himself, in a state of *ceremonial* uncleanness. Such was the rigor of the Law and until you are washed in the blood of Christ—it matters not who or what you are—you defile everything! If you pray, it is but the prayer of the unholy. If you sing, there is no music in the melody to the ear of God. Your need of a new heart has defiled it. All that you do, as it springs from your heart and conscience, which are impure, is defiled. Can a polluted spring send out clear streams? How can your life be right till your heart is right? And how can your heart be right till God, Himself, has renewed it by the power of His eternal Spirit and the merit of the blood of Christ? So you see what an awful thing it was to be unclean. The unclean Jew could not worship. He could not do anything in the midst of his brethren—he was cut off from the Tabernacle of the Lord until such time as he was purified.

We have had enough of that terrible truth if you truly feel it and personally realize it, for now our text sweetly leads us to proclaim that *God has provided a way of cleansing us from sin*—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened." God has provided a means of putting away human sin! The newest gospel, which is no Gospel at all, denies this! It will not have it that the evil of the past life can be obliterated and the guilt of sin can be removed by the blood of Jesus. But, in the face of this lie, we declare, in the name of the Everlasting God, that there *is* free and full forgiveness for every kind and sort of sin through Jesus Christ our Lord! There is a fountain open and, though your life may have been as black as a life can be, we are bound to tell you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that He has come into the world to save sinners, even the very chief of them! And if you believe in Him there shall be no condemnation unto you! All the guilt of your past life shall be as though it had never been—it shall be cast into the depth of the sea where it shall never be brought up again! It shall be blotted out from the very book of Divine Remembrance. This is the Gospel we are sent to preach to you—

"Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood,"

and this pardon for everyone who, with a sincere heart, looks to Christ upon the Cross and trusts in Him.

Note that it is God, Himself, who has provided this fountain. It was God, Himself, who came from Heaven to earth to *be* this fountain! It was

the Son of God, Himself, who had His own heart set abroach to be the fountain out of which should flow the cleansing stream! I delight to dwell upon this theme! Were I but capable of speaking of it as it ought to be spoken of, I would be glad to proclaim day and night this blessed news—not to you sham sinners who have no sin, so you dream—but to you real sinners, you out-of-the-way sinners, you who have gone farthest of all astray from God! It is to *you* we tell this gladsome piece of news, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."

Next, this source of cleansing is described as *a fountain because of its abiding efficacy*. In the Tabernacle *and* the Temple, there stood, as I have already told you, those great bronze lavers. They were enormous cisterns holding vast quantities of water, but they were only cisterns, so that, when many had washed their feet and their hands in them, there was great need that even the lavers should be cleansed and that fresh water should be continually poured into them. But God has not given us a bronze laver or a molten sea, but a fountain, a fountain always flowing and never, itself, deified! However many sinners come and wash, the fountain washes all uncleanness away! It is not, itself, polluted, and the cleansing stream is always springing up, up, up! I think I see Paul as he washed in this Fountain. Oh, what filthiness came off Saul of Tarsus, but after he had washed, the Fountain was just as effectual for Timothy and all whom Paul brought to the Savior! And now, 1,800 years later, we stand by the same Fountain where Paul was washed, and we still sing—

"There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins!
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away!"

It is not a cistern, nor a well into which waters run, but a Fountain from which there is a perpetual welling and bubbling up of fresh cleansing power—"In that day there shall be a fountain."

Notice, too, that this is *an opened fountain*. I know that some people say, "We like to hear about the Gospel, but it does not seem as though we could get at it." Why not? It is open! When there stands in the very middle of the street a drinking fountain, why is it put there but that everybody who is thirsty may come and drink? Does anybody say, "I am not fit to drink at that fountain"? How is that? Whoever said anything about *fitness*? That poor boy who has been turning cartwheels in the mud may come and drink if he likes. Her ladyship is going by with her carriage—she may stop and drink if she likes. Who is the more likely of the two to do it, however? It is your grand, noble, gentlefolk, as people call them, who do *not* like to come and drink! Some of you may fancy that you are too good for Christ to cleanse, too good to be saved—but the poor boys

that make the cartwheels do not think themselves too good to drink at the fountain! They are thirsty, so they come and drink. May the Lord grant that many here may just come and receive Christ in that way! He is an opened Fountain, free to all who will to come—and if any do not will to come, it is their own fault—and on their own heads must the blame lie if they do not come, for the Fountain is opened, and opened on purpose that the vilest of the vile may come and wash, and be clean!

"A fountain opened"—that is, accessible, available. We try to preach about it to make it more open, but I believe that there is some preaching that shuts it up. People cannot understand the minister's philosophy—they cannot make heads or tails of it, they say. But I have desired to use nothing but Saxon speech and to speak to you with great plainness that you may understand the message of the Gospel. Jesus Christ took the sin of men upon Himself and suffered in their place, so that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life—and if you believe in Him, you are washed from your iniquity through the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ! If He paid our debts, they are paid. If He bore the penalty of our sin, it is not to also be borne by us, and we accept Him by faith to stand for us. We are, ourselves, accepted in the Beloved, set free from guilt, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! Well did Joseph Hart sing—

"This Fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear,
The poorer the wretch, the more welcome here!
Come needy, and guilty, come loathsome and bare,
You can't come too filthy, come just as you are!
This Fountain in vain has never been tried—
It takes out all stain whenever applied:
The water flows sweetly with virtue Divine,
To cleanse souls completely, though leprous as mine."

I do not know where you happen to be, poor despairing one. Perhaps you are away there at the back of the gallery, but I am sent especially to you who are most despairing, to you who seem to be in the iron cage and cannot get out. Behold, I wrench away the iron bars with this Gospel word—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," for there is a Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, for the great ones if they will come—for the house of David and for the poor ones if they will come—for the inhabitants of Jerusalem! If they do but come and wash in *this* Fountain, they shall be cleansed!

Sing that one verse now in the middle of my sermon—

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

II. There follows, upon the opening of this cleansing Fountain, A GREAT CHANGE OF CONDUCT. In the second verse of our text we read, "It shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord of Hosts, that I will cut

off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land."

When a man finds pardon, he says to himself, "Now, *away go my sins; away go my sins*. I will not spare one of them." If he has been guilty of drunkenness, away go the pots! If he has been a man who has used foul language, I have often noticed that that is a temptation that generally goes, directly. It has often amazed me that men who have for 50 years scarcely spoken without an oath, from the moment they are converted never swear again! That seems to be a sin that dies very quickly—one stroke, and away it goes! I wish that all other sins went half as easily! But the pardoned man wakes up and finds that he has a great deal to do in clearing out all manner of mischief and rubbish and defilement—but if the Lord has really forgiven him, he says, "Out you go, all of you! None of you are going to stay here. I must have done with you forever. I will not spare one of you guilty things that made my Savior bleed!"—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear."

This clearance of sin should be *very thorough*. There are some who do not begin the new life well—they are half-hearted in giving up sin and they always, sooner or later, give up their profession of Christianity, for there was never any reality in it. But where it is the real work of God's Grace, there the man says, "No, no! I do not want any sin to live and, by God's Grace, it shall not." Perhaps he cannot, for the moment, overcome all sin. Old habits are still strong upon him, but he says, "I will never rest until they are all overthrown, for I will not continue under the power and sway of any one of these, my old idols. Down they shall come. Dagon and all the hellish crew shall be broken in pieces." So did we sing just now—

"Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God!
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!
While with a melting, broken heart,
My murdered Lord I view,
I'll raise revenge against my sins,
And slay the murderers, too."

And that is not all, for the Lord says not only that the idols shall go, but he declares, "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land." *Their very names were to be forgotten*. The Jews did not like to pronounce the names of any of the idol gods—they thought that it polluted their mouths to do so. They often gave to them names in mockery, on purpose, to avoid using the real names. And the child of God says, "I do not want to even *mention* sin." There is great wisdom in what Paul says concerning

all uncleanness, "Let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints, for it is a shame to even speak of those things which are done of them in secret." It is defiling to the mind of the Christian to even *speak* about some of his old ways.

"Oh," says one, "you are a very rigid Puritan!" I am and in this age we need a great deal more than we have of rigid Puritanism! We are to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh! Years ago, when they dug into a disused pit in a village, they took up some old rags and, as a consequence, nearly all the people in that village died of the plague. They did not know what was in the old rags buried in the pit. We are afraid of the old rags of *sin*—we do not like digging them up! I believe that some of you, who used to drink, had better go seven miles round rather than pass some public house doors where you formerly went. Some of you cannot do without awful peril what other people might very freely do because there is a special temptation for you about that particular form of evil. You must not even mention the names of the sins, for there grows up in a man who has been long used to sin, a passion for it, a passion against which he cannot readily guard himself. Stay away, stay away! Remember the old Jewish proverb about the Nazarite who had been pledged from his youth to drink no wine. The proverb says, "O Nazarite, go about, go about and walk not through the vineyard!" Keep as far as you can away from temptation!

So, you see, when the Lord works this great change in us, He makes us to feel that we do not like to even *mention* the names of our old idols—we would put them away out of our mouths altogether.

Yes, and God goes further than that, for He says that He will put away the very remembrance of them—"*they shall no more be remembered*." Augustine, before his conversion, had been in the habit of associating with a woman of vicious life. After his conversion, she passed him in the street and said to him, "Augustine, it is I," and he, as he could not go by without giving her some answer, replied, "Yes, but it is not I!" That is to say, "Augustine is now another Augustine. He can have no more to do with you, for he is a changed man, he forgets his old pursuits." This is what the Lord would have us do. If there is anything which has pleased you, but has grieved Him—if there is anything that has defiled you, then if you have been washed with the blood of your dear Savior's heart—forget that sin! Be today as though you had never known it. Forget its sweetness and only remember the bitterness it brought to Him! Forget its charms as you would forget the azure scales of the serpent and remember only its sting, when it has stung you so—yes, and stung your Savior to the death! God help us in this, dear Friends, not to even remember the names of our old sins, or the sins themselves with any sort of love.

Notice, also, that the Lord went still further than that, for He said. "*I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land*." The prophets were to pass out of the land. "We have no prophets now," says

one. But you know what these prophets did—they led the people to worship false gods. So, when God forgave His people, they sent these prophets packing. Have you any prophets of this sort? I will point out one. He will be outside the Tabernacle, tonight, to meet you. He will come to you and say, "Now, old Friend, come with me, and go to such-and-such a place." On the road he will speak to you in such a way as will drive out of you every impression you have received. It often happens that it is absolutely necessary to say—

"My old companions, fare you well!
I cannot go with you to Hell."

There are connections that must be broken and the sooner you do it, and the more fully you do it, the better for you if there are false prophets who have led you astray—companions who have jested with you, or associates who have led you into vice—and the devil has many of these prophets who seem to be more industrious to damn men than we are to save them! They compass sea and land to make proselytes for infidelity and vice! You know the men and the women, too, and the diligence with which they pursue their evil calling. Come away from them! Come away from them—there are better companions to be found than these. I like to see the workman in the workshop, when he finds that he has to toil with ungodly men, keep himself to himself, or get with some others who are of his own way of thinking and acting—and not mixing with those who are engaged in evil pursuits.

Perhaps there are some young persons here, tonight, who have just left that pretty country village and the old Baptist Meeting House where they have always gone since they were converted, and they are in London for the first time. Now, mind these false prophets that are about! You will find them everywhere—perhaps lads of your own age, or possibly old men, steeped up to their lips in filthiness—they will count it their pleasure to degrade and pollute you! Get away from them! Have nothing to do with them! Fly for your life, even if, like Joseph, you have to leave your cloak behind you! Away, away, away, if God has forgiven you. If not, get forgiveness *now*. Before you go out of this building, seek Jesus, that you may be washed in His precious blood, and then say to yourself, "Now I am the Lord's. The blood that has cleansed me has bought me. I am Christ's man and for Him I will live. I cannot, I will not, have idols! Neither will I hear nor even talk about them, or seem to have any connection with them. I am, if not in the common meaning of the term, yet spiritually, I am a Nonconformist. I will not be conformed to the world, but be separated from it, that I may be conformed to Christ and follow Him in holy ways in the midst of this evil generation."

Look first to my Lord upon the Cross, and when you have looked until your sin is gone, then lift up your hands to Him and solemnly say, "My Lord Jesus, as You have died for me, I will live for You as You shall help me." Amen, so let it be, for Christ's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51; ZECHARIAH 12:10-14; 13:1-6.

We will first read Psalm 51. If we need any music to this Psalm, we must have the liquid melody of tears, sighs, cries, entreaties. It is above all the others, the *penitential Psalm*. It is the Psalm of David when Nathan the Prophet came to him after he had committed his great sin with Bathsheba. Thus, David prayed—

Psalm 51—**Verses 1-3.** *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me*. And there is no hope of pardon unless we do this! We must not try to cloak or hide our sin from God, but we must acknowledge our transgressions. Our sin must be always before us—a ghost that haunts us—a black cloud that hangs over us, which we greatly dread.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* Whatever God may say to us, however sharp it is, and whatever God may *do* to us, however terrible it is, we deserve it! And when we are in a penitential frame of mind, we feel that it is so.

5-7. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* David does not hope to wash himself! He does not trust in outward ceremonies—he appeals to God, the God against whom he has sinned—"Lord, cleanse me. You alone can do it."

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* When God's Spirit deals with sinners, He does not play with them. A sense of sin is like the breaking of bones, but God, who breaks the bone, can heal it! He that takes away our joy, when we are under a sense of sin, can give us back that joy by a realization of pardon!

9. *Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.* "And when You have done that, change my nature, that I may not sin again."

10, 11. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* He might well be afraid that, after so foul a fall, so disgraceful a crime, God would cast him away, but he prays that it may not be so—"Cast me not away from Your Presence."

12, 13. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* "I will tell others what You have done. Your

Free Grace, Your pardoning mercy shall not be hidden away in my breast, but I will begin to be a preacher of Your love. Yes, and I shall have converts, too, for the news of Your Grace to me shall draw others to you—'Sinners shall be converted unto You.'"

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* He puts his finger on the sin. He might have said and, at one time he *did* say, that he did not kill Uriah the Hittite. Ah, but when he is right with God, he makes no pretences! He does not mince the matter, but he confesses the blood-guiltiness, for he was guilty of Uriah's death—"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness." Be honest with God. You will not receive pardon till you are. He can see through you—what is the use of attempting to hide anything from Him? Out with it, Man, that God may out with it, too! Confess it, that God's pardon covering your confession may cover all your sin.

15-17. *O Lord, open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* Are you bringing this sacrifice to the Lord? Are there some in this House of Prayer who have greatly sinned and who are now greatly ashamed of themselves? Take heart of hope, poor Sinner, for God delights to accept a broken and contrite heart!

18, 19. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Now turn to the prophecy of Zechariah, chapter 12, verse ten.

Zechariah 12:10-14. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

Zechariah 13:1, 2. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day.* How much God can crowd into a single day!

2. *Says the LORD of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.* God will not

only destroy the idols, but He will cut off the very names of them out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered.

3. *And it shall come to pass that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, You shall not live; for you speak lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesies.* It was a part of the Law of God in the Book of Deuteronomy that any man who professed to be a prophet and who sought to turn the people aside to the worship of idols, should be put to death. And it is here declared that when God had cleansed the land, there would be no false prophets! And if any man pretended to be a Prophet of the Lord when he was not sent of God, his own father and mother would be the first to execute judgment upon him!

4. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed, every one, of his vision, when he has prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive.* Imitating Elijah's garb, the false prophets hoped to win the attention of the people by the roughness of their dress. But all this would be dropped, for the people would be so well instructed that they would refuse to hear the false prophet.

5. *But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman, for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.* They shall be so ashamed of it that, to have kept cattle shall seem to be a far more noble employment than to have falsely set up to be a Prophet of the Lord!

6. *And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in your hands?* "You wear the marks usually seen in God's servants—you have scarred yourself as His prophets were accustomed to do—you have, as it were, tattooed yourself with the name of your God. What does it all mean?" But he shall be so ashamed of it that—

6. *Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.* He shall say *anything* rather than confess that he is a false prophet, he shall be so ashamed of himself! What a mercy it is when God makes men ashamed of sin, and when He makes them so ashamed of false doctrine that they cannot bear it and will not any longer proclaim it! Oh, that that day were already come!

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.

KEPT FROM INIQUITY
NO. 2432

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 29, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1887.**

***"I kept myself from my iniquity."
Psalm 18:23.***

In our reading we had a very wonderful description of God's delivering mercy towards His servant David. He was very peculiarly tried in the court of Saul. He deserved so much of the king that it was doubly difficult for David to be treated so badly. He had been the deliverer of his country when he slew Goliath, yet he was hunted as if he had been the grossest of malefactors. He had to flee for his life like a partridge upon the mountains—and all the while, no doubt—Saul and his partisans accused him of all manner of evil. There was scarcely any bad thing which they did *not* attribute to David! But he was upright before God and he dared to challenge the investigation of the Most High, for he was sincere and true to the core. He proved by his conduct that he was so, for when Saul was in his hands, on two memorable occasions when he might readily have taken his life, he refused to do so. He would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and, in great Grace, in his own good time, God was pleased to deliver His servant.

If men blow out the candle of a Christian's reputation, God will light it again! If He does not do so in this life, remember that at the Resurrection there will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." It is, after all, of very small account what is said by men whose breath is in their nostrils. "They say. What do they say? Let them say." Let them say till they have done saying—it little matters what they say! Yet, to a sensitive spirit, like that of David, the tongue is a very sharp instrument—it cuts like a razor and pierces, even, to the bones. He felt, therefore, the slander of many, and was sometimes greatly troubled by it. However, God was pleased to work a very marvelous deliverance for him. It seemed as if the Lord would sooner shake the earth to atoms and crush the arches of Heaven than fail to deliver His servant! He will still do so, depend upon it! "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

David attributes his Providential deliverance to the mercy of God by which he had been kept clear in his conduct. "I kept myself from my iniquity." Whatever you do, if you do right, God will see you through, but, whoever you may be, if you turn aside to crooked ways, you will soon fall into a bog. If you try to carve for yourself, you will probably cut your fingers. He who thinks that he can do better by suppressing truth, or by speaking lies, or by acting contrary to the dictates of his conscience will find that he has made a great mistake. Trust so in God as to hold to your integrity. "Let your eyes look right on and let your eyelids look straight before you." Ponder the path of your feet and God will bring you through as surely as He is alive, which is saying much more than if I said as surely as *you* are alive, for, as the Lord lives, before whom we stand, He will not forsake the righteous, nor cast off them that serve Him faithfully!

This is the passage we have to consider, "I kept myself from my iniquity." Here is, first, *a personal danger*—"my iniquity." And, secondly, here is *a special guard*—"I kept myself." And then, thirdly, here is *a happy result*. David could say, as he looked back upon his life, "I kept myself from my iniquity." There was no boasting in this declaration, but as his enemies accused him falsely, like an honest man, he defended himself, for he was truthfully able to say, "I kept myself from my iniquity."

I. Well now, here is, first, A PERSONAL DANGER—"my iniquity."

This is a dreadful possession to have in the house! A man had better have a cage of cobras than have an iniquity, yet we have, each of us, to deal at home with some special form of sin. It is said that there is a skeleton in every closet. I do not know whether that is true, but I do know that there is something very much allied to a skeleton, that is, the body of this death with which we all have to deal—and it takes a special shape in each good man. There is some particular sin which he may call "my iniquity." Not only is there the general iniquity which affects the whole race, but each man has his own particular form of it—"All we like sheep have gone astray; *we have turned, everyone, to his own way*." There is a general sin, but there is a particularity in it, too—each man has his own way of sinning, so that he can speak of "my iniquity."

Let us think of the particular form of iniquity with which some of us have to do. It takes its specialty, perhaps, *from our natural constitution*. He who judges all men alike does them an injustice. There are some who have but little tendency to a particular form of evil, but they have a very great inclination towards some other sin. Some are sanguine—they are expecting great things and they fall into the sin of expecting to drink sweet waters from the cisterns of this world. There are some of quite another temperament who are inclined to despondency, perhaps to suspicion—they may fall into mistrust, or various forms of unbelief and even into despair which will be very grievous to the God who is always gra-

cious. There are some men who, from their very parentage, are inclined to drunkenness or to unchastity. There are others, favored by God with a godly ancestry, who, if they were left to themselves, would not probably fall into either of these forms of sin, yet they might be proud of their own integrity and proud of their own uprightness—and is not pride as great a sin as those more open transgressions? Depend on it, my dear Friend, you have some tendency, peculiar to yourself, and there is a special point where you lie open to the attacks of temptation! Happy will that man be who so knows himself that he sets a double watch against that postern gate through which the adversary is apt to creep in the dark. Peculiar constitutions may lead to special forms of sin and it behooves the godly man to keep himself from his own iniquity!

Our tendency is to decry the particular form of sin that we find in others. We hold up our hands as if we were quite shocked. Better look in the mirror than look out the window! Looking out of the window you see one for whom you are not responsible, but looking in the mirror, you see one of whom you must give account to God—and you will do well to ask God to keep that one! You will, likely enough, within a day's march, not see a much worse man than he is, if you know him well. I remember Mr. Berridge's quaint joke. He had, hanging round his room, the portraits of many ministers and he would say to his friend, "Here is Whitefield, here is Wesley, here is So-and-So." And then, leading his visitor to a mirror, he would say, "Here is the devil." Yes, he is somewhere about there where you are looking. If you look long enough, you may detect some of his handiwork, at any rate, for there is something of his work about us all! Sin, therefore, may be something peculiar to constitution.

But any man may also know that "my iniquity" may be *engendered by education*. How impressible we are in childhood! We bear the print of our mother's fingers when we are 50 years of age and it is not gone from us even when we are old and gray-headed. Things that were done at our father's home are likely to be done in our own home. Things that we saw, things that we heard when we were very young may abide with us and help to shape our whole life. May God help us so to look back upon our early training as to discover the defects of it and, not laying the sin upon others, which would be a wicked perversion of the truth, yet let us remember that as we lived in a sinful generation, we have acquired some taint from it and we have need to watch against the sins which were taught us when we were young, especially any of you who have been rescued by Grace out of homes of drunkenness and debauchery!

I bless the Lord that there are many here who have been brought by Sovereign Grace out of very dens of iniquity! There are some here who are, so far as they are aware, the only ones of all their household who know the Lord—and when they go home tonight, it will be a great pain to

them as they cross the threshold, to think how very different the atmosphere will be from that in the House of Prayer where they have worshipped. Well, my dear Brother or Sister, we sympathize with you in your trial and pray the Lord that you may carefully watch and that you may be kept from your iniquity.

No doubt there are certain forms of iniquity which grow *out of our particular condition.* The young man has his iniquity—it is not the iniquity of the aged. The young man is tempted to sinful pleasure, the old man to covetousness. Each period of life has its own special snare. Pray, I beseech you, young people, middle-aged people, old people—pray the Lord that you may be kept from the peculiar iniquity of that part of life through which you are going! He who leaves the shores of England for Australia may ask the guardian care of God while yet the white cliffs of Albion have scarcely melted from his view! Let him ask God's blessing as he passes through the middle passage of the Suez Canal. And let him not forget to pray when the captain tells him that within a few days he will come in sight of the southern shore. No, all along, we need God's Grace!

It is so with our condition of life as to our outward circumstances. The rich man has his temptations. Few know how great they are, or they would not be so eager after riches. It is as hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle! It is a natural impossibility, for so many difficulties surround the possession of riches. But with God all things are possible! Yet the poor man will not find that he has a much larger hole to go through—his straitened circumstances will not materially help him. Agur did well to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." There are peculiar trials in each condition and even the middle way between the two is not without its own special temptations so that, whether you have much or little, pray God that you may keep yourself from your iniquity.

There are iniquities which come through prosperity. I have never yet prayed to God to preserve me in going up in a balloon, for I have never had any idea of entering one, but whenever you prosper very greatly, and especially when you prosper very quickly, you are much like a man going up in a balloon. If people knew the danger, they would send in prayers to the Monday night Prayer Meeting, asking that the Lord would have mercy upon the man who is greatly prospering, for there are very peculiar trials surrounding that condition! Oh, that men might be kept from that cleaving to the world and letting the Savior go which so often follows upon great success in life!

But equally must he pray who is in adversity. Oh, the ills of adversity! The worst ill of all is the tendency to doubt God and to put forth your hand unto iniquity in order to remove the heavy load. Pray the Lord, you who are losing everything, that He will keep you from your iniquity! You

need not pray, like Pharaoh, "Take away the frogs," but pray like David, "Take away my iniquity." That is the prayer of the true child of God!

I may be speaking to some who have great talents. Well, you have need to pray, "Lord, keep me from my iniquity," for great talent is a very dangerous thing for a man to possess, a charge which needs great Grace. And, if you have but one talent, your iniquity may be to wrap it in a napkin and hide it in the earth. There is a temptation in the one talent as well as in the five! Therefore, pray the Lord to keep you from that iniquity which is often the accompaniment of the particular condition in which you are found.

Brothers, there are some of you who have need to pray this prayer in reference to your calling. I do not think that any calling is free from temptation, but there are some positions in which the temptation is very terrible. I need not go into those which surround many of you in trade, when everybody seems to, "cut the thing fine," as they say, and to cut the *truth* much finer than anything else—and say a great deal that is not true under the notion that, somehow or other, it will help business. If there are customs in your trade which all others follow and which you know to be wrong, do not adopt them! Say, "Lord, keep me from my iniquity." You need not begin to say, "Those grocers, those milk-dealers, those publicans all have their iniquities." Think about *your own*—quite enough iniquities may crowd into *your* shop without your thinking about the shops of other people. Pray the Lord that you may be kept from your iniquity.

And, O Beloved, what iniquities there are which surround us all in daily life! Into what company can you go without being tempted? In this city, at the present time, the position of a Christian is very much like that of Lot in Sodom. I speak what I know! I do not exaggerate the conditions which surround the lives of some Christian working men and women who are not able to let their children go into our streets by reason of the filthiness of the language that they would hear. Even round about this House of Prayer is a very cauldron of iniquity, so that many say, "We cannot live there and we do not know where to live to keep our children out of the temptations which now surround them." I say not that one age is worse than another, but I do say that the peculiar trials of today should make Christians walk very near to God and, instead of loosening and relaxing the lines of our religious profession, let us tighten them as much as we can and seek to be thoroughly Nonconformist, not conforming to the world, to be out and out Dissenters, dissenting from the ways of this ungodly generation!

Still, to help you to find out your iniquity, I will make one or two more remarks. It is likely to be *that iniquity which you have most often fallen into in your previous life*. What has been your toughest struggle? Against quickness of temper? Then, that is your iniquity. Doubt and mistrust?

That is your iniquity. Has it been covetousness? Has it been slowness to forgive any who have offended you? Has it been gossiping and mixing untruth with your talk? That is your iniquity. Whatever it is which, up to now, has stained your life, that is probably the thing which will stain it again unless you watch and call in the power of the Holy Spirit for your protection! That sin which you find yourself readily committing, which you drift into without any effort, yes, which you drift into when you are making a great many efforts *not* to do it—that is your iniquity! That which you have returned to after having smarted for it. That which you have vowed you would never be guilty of again and which yet has, in a moment, like the bursting forth of some hidden spring of water, carried you away with a rush—that is your iniquity! Oh, how can you keep yourself from it unless God shall keep you? Cry unto the Most High to enable you to keep yourself from your iniquity! That is your iniquity which has overtaken you even after you have prayed against it and labored against it—that you have concluded that surely you will never do it again—and yet you have done it.

Let me tell you one thing more—*that which you do not like to hear condemned*, that which you do not like the preacher to mention, that which makes you wriggle in your seat and feel, "I wish he would not say that, he is coming too closely home"—that is your iniquity! And if you can not bear that you wife should speak to you about it, or that your brother or your sister should give you a friendly word of advice concerning it—that which you are most loath to hear, probably has to do with your iniquity! We may often judge ourselves by this test. It is that which you are most *loath* to hear that you have most *need* to hear. Instead of being angry with him who points it out to you, you should be willing to *pay* him for doing it! When you go to your doctor and ask him to examine you—if he says, "There is something a little amiss with the heart, or with the lungs," do you knock him down? Do you get angry with him for telling you the truth? No, you give him his guinea and even thank him for imparting bad news! And should we not thank those who rebuke us and tell us of our faults? When God does not send you a faithful friend, I pray Him to send you an honest enemy who will deal straightly with you—and let you know where you weakness is, that you may then cry to God—"Lord, keep me from my iniquity."

II. Now, secondly, in our text there is A SPECIAL GUARD—"I kept myself from my iniquity."

Someone may perhaps say, "I have a special temptation, but I am going to set a guard against it." Let me ask you, first, who you are—are you a child of God? Have you passed from death unto life? If you say, "No," I am not referring to you in this part of my subject. You must be born again, you must go by faith to Jesus Christ and ask for cleansing in His

precious blood and renewal by the Holy Spirit. I am now talking to the child of God—the man or woman who has spiritual life. I speak to you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, because you can, by God's Grace, keep yourself from your iniquity. How are you to do it?

Well, first, you must *find out what it is*. You must get a clear idea of your own iniquity. Ask the Lord to search you and try you, and know your ways. When you have found out what that iniquity is, then endeavor *to get a due sense of its foulness and guilt in the sight of God*. Ask the Lord to make you hate, most, that sin to which you are most inclined. Remember that you are a child of God—it ill becomes you to be friendly with any of the King's enemies! Remember that Christ has bought you—you belong to Him—you should not be the slave of any sin. You must not be such if the life of God is in you. The life of God in the soul hates sin! You cannot take pleasure in any sin if you are, indeed, a regenerate man or woman. Therefore, I say to you, seek to get a sight of the heinousness of your particular sin and the danger which attends it, that, as you have an extraordinary horror of it, you may set that over against your tendency to it.

Then, *be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome*. There is nothing like hanging it up by the neck, that very sin, I mean. Do not fire at sin indiscriminately, but, if you have one sin that is more to you than another, drag it out from the crowd and say, "You must die if no other does. I will hang you up in the face of the sun." Strive against your anger. Strive against your covetousness. Strive against your envy. Strive against your evil temper, your malice, if that is your fault, for there are some who are very slow to forgive. Strive against it till you get your foot upon its neck. "I cannot do it," says one. Why? The Lord has said that He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly! Surely if you are to have the devil under your feet, you can get all sin under your feet by God's help—and you *must* do it. It is a part of that work that must be worked in us to bring every thought into captivity to Divine Grace. You are not able to subdue the least sin apart from Christ, but, by the help of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing that can master you!

I tell you that if you let any sin master you, you will be lost! If any sin should remain unconquered, you are ruined, for this is the way of salvation—*the absolute conquest of every sin through the Grace of the Holy Spirit*. It must be so with you before you can enter Heaven—and you *are* able to overcome it in the power of Jesus Christ! If you have an iniquity that more than another haunts you, then keep away from all that tempts you to it. Is there a house where your company is much liked, but where you are never able to come away without having fallen into sin? Keep away from that house! It is often one of the most essential things in young converts that they should quit the company in which they once

sported. You may go into some company to do good, but mind that you are strong enough to resist the evil, for it does not always do for those who have but little strength to attempt to pull others out of the fire—they may be pulled into it themselves! No, come out from among them! Be you separate! Touch not the unclean thing! You have no business to be in that place where it becomes almost necessary that you should sin—that necessity should warn you not to go there!

The true path of safety is to *pray and believe against all sin*. We conquer sin by faith in Christ! This is the axe that will cut down the upas tree—and there is no other that will do it. Believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior, who died for you, and then believe in Him as living again and willing to help you in every conflict against sin. Go, having Christ Crucified with you, and ask Him to crucify your sin and nail it up to His Cross. So you shall be helped to overcome, but there must be care, prayer, watchfulness, trust and continual looking up to the Lord for Grace. Only so can you say, "I kept myself from my iniquity."

III. Thirdly, I conclude with A HAPPY RESULT.

David says, "I kept myself from my iniquity." He does not say that he *could* not sin, but that he *would* not, and he did not. When a wicked man gets old, he may say, "I do not sin like those young people." No, because you *cannot*—it has been well said that there is many an old man who, if you could put young eyes in him, would look the same way as he used to do! That is not what we want—it is not the failure to commit a sin because your passions have grown colder, or your strength has left you—it is a *change of heart* that is needed. "I kept myself from my iniquity." That is, "Though it would try to tempt me, and did so, and I might have yielded to it, yet by the Grace of God I would not yield."

I pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that if we live 10, 20, 30, or even 50 more years, we may be able to say, without any boasting, but in deep humility before God, "By His great Grace, by trust in Jesus, I kept myself from my iniquity," because, if we do so, *see what a blessing it will be to us*, for it will be to us a reason for our being brought out of the trouble! If when you are in need, if when you are under temptation, God helps you to keep straight, you will come out all right at the last. What a number of stories I might tell here of young men who were great losers, at first, by being godly, but they kept themselves right—and they always had to thank God for it afterwards.

I know, at this present moment, a personal friend who was a banker's clerk. On a certain day he was told to do something which he judged to be, speaking plainly, dishonest. He told the manager that he could not do it, whereupon he received a month's notice. It was a country bank and he was not sent about his business at once—and he had time to turn the matter over. He had a wife and children and when he went home, it was

not easy to tell the wife that the excellent position that he held would be vacated within a short time. But he stood fast in his integrity. He said that he was sure God would bring him safely through and he never had even the slightest thought of doing other than he had said he would do.

It was within twelve months that he obtained the position of manager for that very bank—and it belongs to him at this moment! He very speedily became a man in a much better position than he could have expected to have obtained simply from the fact that it had been proven that he could be trusted. It is not always so—some people have to be a long time under a cloud—but, in the long run, if you, as a child of God, will but stand fast, God will not let you be a loser. If He does, it shall be your glory to lose everything sooner than tarnish you character! You shall find it a greater joy to lose all things for Christ than it would be to gain the whole world by doing anything that was wrong! If you are able to say, "I kept myself from my iniquity," then you shall *also* be able to say with David, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised."

Next, if you act thus, *it will be a triumph of Divine Grace*. Brethren, we want to show the world what Grace can do, and every member of the Church ought to feel that he is put upon his behavior to prove what the Grace of God has done in him! What credit is brought to Christ by professed Christians who are so like worldlings that if you put them under a microscope, you could not tell the difference between them? If you can do what worldlings do, you shall go, at last, where worldlings go! If Grace does not make you to differ from them, it is not the Grace of God, it is all a sham. We ought to feel that Christ's honor is in danger by our ill behavior and so live that we can glorify our Father who is in Heaven by our good works, keeping ourselves from our iniquity.

For again, *this will be our best testimony to others*. It is well to preach as I do, with my lips. But you can *all* preach with your feet and by your lives—and that is the most effective preaching! The preaching of holy lives is living preaching! The most effective ministry from a pulpit is that which is supported by godliness from the pew! God help you to do this!

And, lastly, *what a sweet peace this will give to your conscience*! Though we know we are saved by Grace, hear this, you ungodly! There is no way of salvation for you, or for us, but by the Grace of God through Jesus Christ—yet when we are saved, the evidence to our own soul of that work of Grace upon our nature is very sweet when we can say, "I have kept myself from my iniquity." A well-spent life, a life that is pure, a life that has been consecrated to usefulness, a life in which there has not been a turning aside to the right hand or to the left, helps us to lie down with comfort upon our dying bed and bid farewell to all our dear ones

and feel that we are leaving behind us the legacy of a gracious example in which we do not glory, but for which we give God the glory and thank and praise His holy name! Begin at the Cross—*there* is the source of your salvation! Then go and live like the living Savior. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake!

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.

HEMAN'S SORROWFUL PSALM
NO. 2433

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 6, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1887.

"But unto You have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer come before You."
Psalm 88:13.

WHAT misery of soul some persons endure before they find peace with God! There is no need that it should be so with them—their anguish often arises from a mistake. The Gospel is very simple—it is just—"Believe and live." He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned—he at once receives pardon, passes from death unto life—and he shall never come into condemnation. But a very large number of persons will not go the straight road to Heaven. They cannot believe that it is the right road, so they get troubled in their thoughts—tumbled up and down in their minds—as John Bunyan puts it. They go staggering over dark mountains, stumbling and falling, wounding and bruising themselves, and it is a long time before they come out into the light and joy of peace in believing. I would recommend you young people, especially, to take the straight way to salvation by trusting in Jesus just as you are. You shall, by doing so, avoid the poor pilgrim's Slough of Despond and many other things that might trouble and burden you. But, as I know that many do go round about and so get troubled and perplexed, I am going to talk to *them* from these words of the Psalmist.

This good man, Heman the Ezrahite, went by this rough roundabout road that some of you have taken, and thus he found himself in terrible places. He seems to have been brought about as low as a man can be brought, but all the while there was this fact in his favor—he continued praying. He did pray. He would pray. He could not be made to leave off praying! If, by some process or other, Satan could have dragged him from the Mercy Seat, he would have had the diabolical hope of his ultimate destruction. But as long as the man kept on his knees, repeating his earnest cry to God for mercy, it was not possible that he could be destroyed! I may now be addressing some who, in the depth of their trouble, have been praying to God. Not always with a brave, believing heart, but still, with intense sincerity and earnestness—and now it has come to this pass with them—the evil spirit says, "Do not pray any more. Give it up! It is of no use. God will never hear you." If that is *your* temptation,

dear Friend, may the Holy Spirit come to your rescue while I talk familiarly with you in His name!

First, from this Psalm, *learn how to pray*. Secondly, from the Psalmist's example, *resolve to pray in your very worst case*. After I have spoken upon these two points, I shall close by giving you some *reasons why you will find it wise to thus pray*.

I. First, then, from this Psalm, LEARN HOW TO PRAY.

A great many people make a mistake about what prayer really is. They seem to think that it consists in repeating a form of words, but it does not. The witch of old used to mutter certain phrases and she pretended that she worked great wonders by repeating such and such words backwards! But there was no real power about her words—it was sheer superstition to believe in her incantations. I pray you, beloved Friends, do not rely upon prayer as a kind of witchcraft, for it is nothing better than witchcraft to believe that the mere utterance of certain sacred words and phrases can have any appreciable effect either upon yourselves or upon God! Prayer is the longing of the soul to hold communion with the Most High, the desire of the heart to obtain blessings at His hands. James Montgomery happily described what real prayer is when he wrote—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.
Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try!
Prayer the most sublime strains that reach
The Majesty on high!
Prayer is the contrite sinners voice
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, 'Behold he prays!'"

If you would pray aright, you will do wisely to copy the writer of this Psalm and, first, *tell the Lord your case*. In this Psalm, Heman makes a map of his life's history. He puts down all the dark places through which he has traveled. He mentions his sins, his sorrows, his hopes (if he had any), his fears, his woes and so on. Now, that is real prayer—laying your case before the Lord! Go to your chamber, shut your door and tell the Lord all about yourself! Do you lack words? Well then, use no words. Tell Him all simply by the movements of your thoughts, for God can read the thoughts of men. Act as if you, like Hezekiah, were opening a letter—and spread it out before the Lord. Hide nothing from Him! It is true that you cannot hide it, for He knows all about you. But, still, do not try to conceal anything from Your God. Tell Him about your life of sin. Tell Him of

your vain attempts to make yourself better. Tell Him of your many failures. Tell Him of your false hopes. Tell Him of all your blunders and mistakes and then say, "Lord, I do not, even now, fully understand my own case, but You do. Do with me according to Your own wisdom and prudence, and save Your servant, I beseech You." That is the way to pray! This is how the Psalmist prayed. Try the same plan as soon as you get home. No, do not delay, but pray thus at once! Open your heart to God and spread your case before Him right now!

Then, the next rule of prayer is, *pray naturally*. Note that the Psalmist says, "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You." Children are very eloquent when they cry—you have no need to teach them the arts of oratory or of posturing when they really want a thing—they cry all over till they get it! That is truly the way to pray—when you so want the blessing that your heart and your flesh cry out to the living God! You will not need to trouble about words. Your eyes shall aid you with their liquid pleas. Your breath shall assist you as you sigh and sob. Every part of your being shall help you as you stretch out your hands to God. The best prayer is like a cry—the most natural expression of the sorrow and the need of the heart. Come like that to God! Get upstairs into that little room where no eyes but the Lord's shall see you—and there cry to Him, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." That is the way to pray, not to repeat some pompous form which may have been useful to saints in ages gone by, but to let your very soul pour out itself like water before the Lord in the most natural way that it can find!

But you must also notice, in the first verse, what is very essential to prayer. The Psalmist says that he cried day and night *before God*. This makes a wonderful difference in prayer! Praying is not whistling to the winds, it is crying before God—speaking to God! You cannot see Him, but He is there! Then tell Him your case. You cannot hear His footsteps to remind you of His Presence, but He is there, so ask for what you need—deal directly with God! Remember what Paul wrote to the Hebrews—"He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Believe that God is and that He hears prayer, and you shall find it to be so in your own experience! I challenge any man to put this matter to the test and see if he does not find it as I say. There never was one, yet, who did come thus to God and God sent him away empty! Poor trembling Soul, get to your God! If up to now your prayers have been earnest, but you have left out this one important point that you have not really prayed to *Him*, then begin at once in a better style. You may write a hundred letters to a friend, but you will never receive an answer to them if you do not properly direct them and mail! So, many persons forget to direct and post their prayers by really presenting them before God.

Next, dear Friends, this Psalm will help you in prayer if you read aright its first words—"O Lord God of my salvation." Pray with this belief

fixed in your mind—that your help *must* come from God—and *pray expecting salvation from the Lord*. It is true, whether you know it or not, that you are lost—and that only God, Himself, can save you. Pray in the full belief of that fact. Go to God with this thought in your mind and this utterance out of your mouth—"O Lord, I am lost unless You help me! I am undone unless You come to my rescue! Here I am at your Mercy Seat, crying to You, Lord, save me." Do not go to so-called priests. Do not go to ministers or to Christian friends with any idea that they can help you the turn of an ounce! Go straight away to God, applying to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is not possible that He will turn you away! Try it and see. Some of us who were certainly as guilty as ever you can be, have tried this plan and we have found mercy and we are, therefore, all the more earnest in entreating you and all other sinners to do the same!

Further, dear Friends, that you may pray aright, notice that *the Psalmist prayed often*. In the first verse he says, "I have cried day and night before You." Further on he says, "I have called daily upon You." I like those morning prayers of which our text speaks—"In the morning shall my prayer come before You." I remember, as a lad, when I was seeking the Savior, getting up with the sun that I might get time to read gracious books and to seek the Lord. When I look back upon it, I can see why the Word was blessed to me when I heard the Gospel preached in that Methodist Chapel at Colchester, because I had, before that, been up many times crying to God for the blessing! There are some people here who do not know what it is like early in the morning. You never did, in your lives, see the sunrise, did you, unless you got up earlier than usual one winter's morning? I have often proved that the early morning is the best part of the day. The dew of the morning has medicine in it to drive away many a disease. A little while, all alone in the morning, might prove to be the time in which God would meet with you—will you not try it?

But the Psalmist says that he also prayed at night. Perhaps, when others were asleep, he stole from his couch and bowed His knee, and cried to God. When all is hushed and still—and there is, even in London, an hour of that kind, somewhere between three and four o'clock in the morning when the streets cease, for a while, their almost perpetual grind and the air is still and quiet—it is wonderful how you may be helped to pray by the silence that is round about you! O Friend, if you are not saved, I would beseech you to get up at the dead of night and cry to God for salvation! I would advise you not to go to your beds, nor to think of falling asleep till you have believed in Jesus to the saving of your soul lest you should never wake up in this world, but should awake in that state in which there is no hope, forever, for those who have died impenitent! Dear Hearts, cry often, cry continually to God until He gives you this salvation! And after that I know you will always cry to Him, for you will not be able to help it! Prayer will become your daily breath and you

will pray, then, as naturally as your lungs now heave with the breath of life! But pray often, even as Heman did.

The Psalmist tells us, also, that *he prayed with weeping and mourning*. Read verse nine—"My eyes mourn by reason of affliction: Lord, I have called daily upon You." That is a blessed style of praying, when the prayers are salted with penitential tears! If your heart is breaking with repentance and sorrow for sin, you will break down the bars which shut you out of hope and peace! If you will give up your sin. If you mourn over your sin. If you sigh and cry to become gracious and holy, you shall prevail before long, for God may permit a weeping penitent to stand awhile at mercy's door, but He can never send that penitent away empty, for it is written over that door (I can read the golden letters)—"He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." While God lives, never shall a sinner truly come to Him and yet be cast out! I say again, go and try it, go and try it, and you shall find it to be so!

Once more, you will perhaps find prayer more successful if you follow the Psalmist's way of *praying pleadingly*. Notice how he puts it in the 10th verse—"Shall the dead arise and praise You?" Plead with God! If you are in earnest, you will soon find pleas that you can use with Him. "Lord, save me! It will glorify Your Grace to save such a sinner as I am. Lord, save me, else I am lost to all eternity! Do not let me perish, Lord! Save me, O Lord, for Jesus died. By His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, save me." I am going over the kind of pleas I used when I took my arguments and came before the Throne of Grace and said, "I will not go away, I will not quit the Mercy Seat except You bless me." Surely you can find some reason why you should be saved! Look not for it in any merit of your own, else you will look where you will never find it! But look to His Free Grace and Sovereign Love—to the heart of God and to the bleeding wounds of Jesus—and say to God, "Lord, I cannot, I will not, let You go except You bless me." If you pray in that fashion, it will not be long before the morning light of salvation will break in upon your troubled spirit!

II. This leads me now, briefly, to speak upon my second division—from the Psalmist's example, RESOLVE TO PRAY IN YOUR VERY WORST CASE.

I want to go over the Psalm, again, very rapidly, to remind you of the writer's experience. This man of God was, first, *full of troubles*. Note what he says in the third verse—"My soul is full of troubles." Yet he prayed! When you are full of troubles, go to God with them, that is the very time when you most need to pray. "But," you say, "Mr. Spurgeon, you do not know all that I have to think of." No, but I do know that the more you have to think of, the more reason you have to go to God in prayer about it. That was a grand argument of Martin Luther when he said to his friend, "I have a very busy day, today. I have so much work to do that I am afraid I shall not get through it all. I must have at least three hours'

prayer, or else I shall not have time to get through all my toil." The more work he had to do, the more prayer he felt that he needed! Is not that right? The more loads you have to drag, the more horses you need—and the more work there is to be done, the more reason is there for crying to God to help you to do it! That is not a waste of time. On the contrary, it is the best employment of time that anyone can have!

When you are full of trouble, pray the more. "Ah," says one, "I gave up praying, Sir, because I was in such trouble." Foolish brother! Foolish sister! Another says, "I went down in the world till I felt that I had not any clothes fit to come in." Clothes fit to come in? Any clothes are fit to come in if you have paid for them! "Oh!" says another, "but I was so troubled that I did not like to come." What? Not go to the House of the Lord when you most need comfort? That is the time when you ought certainly to come! Do not, I pray you, stay away from the outward means of Grace when you are in trouble! But especially do not stay away from God, Himself, when you are tried and perplexed. When you are as full of trouble as you can be, *then* is the time to pray the most!

Next, it seems that the Psalmist was *ready to die*—"My life draws near unto the grave." Well, do not leave off praying because you are ready to die! Then, surely, is the time to pray more earnestly than ever—

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air!
His watchword at the gates of death—
He enters Heaven with prayer."

If you are going to die, die praying! Do not let the fear of death stop your praying, that would be folly, indeed!

Moreover, the Psalmist had *given himself up*—"I am counted with them that go down into the pit." Well now, if you have given yourself up, yet still pray. I know that you say, "Sir, I am in despair." Well, offer one more prayer, Brother! One more prayer and if you should not get comfort, then, I will come to you and say, yet again, "One more prayer." If you despair of everything else, yet do not despair of the mercy of God! Your extremity will be the Lord's opportunity. Keep on praying! As long as you are out of Hell, still keep on praying, and so you shall never go there, for no praying soul can ever be cast away from the Presence of God. Keep on praying, I beseech you, even if worse comes to worse.

I fancy that I hear you say, "Oh, but I have no strength left!" Well, then, you are just like Heman, *with no strength*, for he said, "I am as a man that has no strength." Pray all the more if that is your case. If you have not strength to kneel, fall flat on your face and pray to God, but keep at it, hold on to it! If you can scarcely hold on, yet somehow or other get a grip of the Divine promise and plead for God's mercy for the sake of Jesus—and you shall never perish!

I do not know whether I am spreading my net widely enough, but there may be one who says, "*I am forgotten.*" Then listen to what Heman

says—"I am like the slain that are in the grave, whom You remember no more: and they are cut off from Your hands." Man, if you have written yourself down as lost. If you have given up all prayer. If you never open your Bible. If you have resolved never again to come to the House of God because you despair of mercy, yet, I beseech you, know that it is a *lie* that deceives you! There is still hope for you! Believe that Jesus still receives sinners—yes, such sinners as you are—and go to Him by believing prayer and you shall yet find mercy! There are many records of men and women who have been in despair through guilt for 20 years or even a longer period and then have been Divinely delivered!

I remember one case, that of Mr. Timothy Rogers, who was 28 years in despair and yet came out to light and liberty—and wrote a wonderful book on trouble of mind which has been a comfort to many other afflicted souls. Do not despair even if Satan seems to have gripped you and to be dragging you down to the bottomless pit! As long as you yet live, the Gospel woos you and entreats you to believe in Jesus Christ, for there is yet room in the heart of God and in the love of God for such a sinner as you are! I pray you, do not cease to cry unto God! Still continue calling upon Him till He gives you a comforting answer!

Perhaps you say, "*I feel the wrath of God so heavily*." What if you do? Go and plead the mercy of God in Christ and, as Christ, in the place of sinners, bore His Father's wrath, go and rest in that great vicarious Sacrifice! "But I have nobody to speak to," says another. Never mind if you have not—that is all the more reason why you should pray to God and plead with God who will not leave you. "*But I am distracted*," says another. Yes, and you *will be* distracted, and I should not wonder if you went out of your mind unless you go to God as you are, and implore Him to look at your distractions and to lay His gentle hand upon you and restore you to yourself—and then to restore you to *Himself*. I wish I knew how to plead with each one of you personally. I feel that I want to go down these stairs, and round these galleries, and to pick out men and women who are being tempted not to pray, again, and to give each of them a brotherly grip of the hand and to say, "Do not cease to plead for your life! Do not cease to look to Jesus on the Cross! Hope in Him! It is Satan's desire to ruin you by leading you to despair! Take heart of hope and believe that Mercy's gate is still open to you! Come, and welcome, and you shall in no wise be cast out."

III. Now I finish with A FEW REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD KEEP ON PRAYING and why you should add to your prayer a simple confidence in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the first reason. Suppose, dear Friend—and I do not like even to *suppose* such a thing—but, for the sake of argument, suppose that what your despair says is true—that you will perish? Then *you cannot lose anything by prayer*, can you? Remember what we sang a few minutes ago—

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

I repeat that you cannot lose anything by prayer. "Oh," I have said to myself, when broken down under a sense of sin, "God cannot be angry with me for crying to Him for mercy! Surely that cannot be an increase of my guilt—that I dare to say, 'Lord, forgive me.' The worst criminal before a judge may at least beg for mercy, so I will put in my plea—in broken words and with many tears. I cannot lose anything by praying and, therefore, I will certainly continue to pray unto the Lord."

Moreover, dear Friends, *it is not so great a thing, after all, to have to continue to ask*. It is not so hard a thing for me to be made to wait a little while. As a sinner I kept God waiting for me long enough, yes, far too long! He called, but I would not come—what wonder if now He keeps me waiting? Shall I be in a pet and say, "I will wait no longer"? Oh, the many sermons I have heard and thrown on one side! Oh, the many times the Spirit of God has touched my conscience and I have resisted His strivings! Ought I, therefore, to be at all surprised if now He should say to me, "You must wait a bit at Mercy's gate, for I will have you knock, and knock, and knock again before I let you in"? Oh, no, it is not so hard a thing, and it will pay me for waiting! When He does but open the gate, I shall think very little of the many prayers and tears that I have offered to Him—I shall be so overjoyed to get inside that I shall bless Him for keeping me waiting! Therefore, my Soul, press on!

Keep on praying, for what if He should, after all, hear you? O poor Heart, what if, after all, your sin should be forgiven you and you should become a child of God? O you forlorn one, what if the light of Heaven should yet shine in upon your heart and all the bells of holy joy should ring within your spirit? What if it should be so? And it *will* be so if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! It may be that you are within an inch of salvation even now. Let me tell you, if you are but looking to Jesus, you already have salvation! One trustful glance at Him upon the Cross and you are saved, saved now, and saved forever! God grant that it may be so with you!

At any rate, cease not to pray, *for He to whom you pray is a gracious God*. The widow who went to the unjust judge was importunate and prevailed with him, unjust as he was. But you are pleading with a loving God who gave His Son to die for sinners! Take good heart—you will not plead in vain, for He loves to hear your prayers. He must, He *will* answer you, for He is a God of Grace!

Besides, *if He does not save you, will He be a gainer by it*? And if He does save you, will He be a loser by it? Oh, no, dear Heart! If He will save you, it will increase His honor and His Glory. Why, you yourself will tell everybody what a good God He is, will you not? And your friends and

your neighbors, when they see you saved, such a sinner as you are, will begin to say to one another, "Here is a wonder of Grace! Look what God has done for this man. Let us come and seek Him, too." It is not to God's disadvantage to save you, now that Christ has died. Therefore, take heart and be of good courage.

Moreover, *He has heard others*. He who speaks to you, now boldly tells you that God heard him. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears! This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Come along with you, whoever you are. I am sure you can pray as well as I did when first I sought His face. I am sure you know about as much of the Gospel as I did when I first looked to Him, for I did not really know the Truth of God till I heard that word, "Look! Look! Look!" That is about all I know even now! I look at Jesus and He looks at me! I am looking to Jesus, and I am lightened of all my burden! That is the whole story. Look to Him and you shall be lightened, too! If others have been saved, why should you not be saved? Therefore, pluck up heart and still cry mightily and believingly to Him!

More than that, *the Lord has promised to hear you*. Listen, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Here is another precious promise, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is a big, "whoever"! Let me repeat that text. "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The Lord does hear prayer! Do not let any unbelief upon that point linger any longer in your heart! He will hear you, now, sitting in your pew. Try it! Try it! If you have been praying for months and yet no peaceable answer has come to you, resolve this moment that you will never cease your entreaties until He grants you the desire of your heart!

I am looking upon many young men and women here—how I wish that they would all look to Jesus even now! Oh, that at least some of you, dear young Friends, might begin to be Christians from this very hour! The harvest is past, the summer is well-near ended and you are not saved! Before the leaves fall from the trees, yield yourselves to Jesus! There are some boys and girls here—the Lord grant that they may, while they are yet children, trust in Jesus and be saved! But the most of you are men and women in middle life and many, very many of you, are aged people. Have you found Christ, dear Friend? Are there any of you old folks who are without Christ? I cannot make you out—gray-headed and yet unconverted? What is to become of you? In the order of nature, you must soon die. The young *may* die, but the old MUST. Oh, that you would not rest in your declining years till all is right for eternity! You know what accidents are constantly occurring and how suddenly men pass into eternity! A man has heart disease and without a moment's warning he is hurried before his Maker's bar! Prepare to meet your God

and do so by believing in Him whom God has set forth to be the Savior of men, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

God bless you, dear Hearers! We shall never, all of us, meet again on earth—that is not possible among these thousands from all quarters of the globe—but may the sincere penitent prayer of all the unsaved among us be so heard that we may all meet in Heaven! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 88.

A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahaloth Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite. I think that this is the darkest of all the Psalms—it has hardly a spot of light in it. The only bright words that I know of are in the first verse. The rest of the Psalm is very dark and very dreary. Why, then, am I going to read it? Because, it may be there is some poor heart, here, that is very heavy. You cannot proclaim of this great crowd how many sorrowing and burdened spirits there may be among us, but there may be a dozen or two of persons who are driven almost to despair. My dear Friend, if this is your case, I want you to know that somebody else has been just where you are. Remember how the shipwrecked man upon the lonely island all of a sudden came upon the footprints of another human being? So here, on the lone island of despondency, you shall be able to trace the footprints of another who has been there before you. Hear how he prays.

Verse 1. *O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You.* It was only a cry, a cry as of an animal in pain, or, at best, the cry as of a child that has lost its mother. "I have cried day and night before You."

2. *Let my prayer come before You.* "Give me an audience, O Lord. Do not shut the door in my face. My prayer has been knocking, knocking, knocking, at Your gate! Open it. 'Let my prayer come before You.'"

2. *Incline Your ear unto my cry.* "Stoop down to me out of Heaven, O Lord. Bow that ear of Yours to hear even my feeble and unworthy cry. I know that I do not deserve it. I know that it will be a great act of condescension on Your part, but do 'incline Your ear unto my cry.'"

3. *For my soul is full of troubles.* "Full of troubles, brimming over with grief, and every drop of it is as bitter as gall."

3, 4. *And my life draws near unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit.* "They put me down as a dead man. They that see the lines of fierce despair upon my face reckon that I cannot live long. 'I am counted with them that go down into the pit.'" These were his pleas in crying unto God—

"Distresses round me thicken,
My life draws near the grave!

Descend, O Lord, to quicken,
Descend, my soul to save!"

4. *I am as a man that has no strength.* Here is one, in the time of manhood, when he should be strongest, who yet says, "I am as a man that has no strength." This subject may not interest some of you, just now, but it is here, so we must mention it. And it may be needed even by you, one of these days. Bright eyes are not always bright and the earthly joy that leaps and dances does not abide forever! The day may come when you will turn to this Psalm with the two eights in it and find comfort in it because it describes your case, also.

5. *Free among the dead*—A freeman of the sepulcher, at home at death's dark door. "Free among the dead,"

5. *Like the slain that lie in the grave whom You remember no more: and they are cut off from Your hand.* This is, perhaps, the most awful depth of the whole Psalm. The writer bemoaned that he was not remembered, even, by God, any more, and that he was cut off from God's hand. At least, so he thought.

6, 7. *You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah.* Very properly here comes a, "Selah." Such a strain upon the harp strings had put them all out of tune! So the players had notice to retune their harps and the singers were bid to lift up the strain of their song. It seems to me as if the writer, here, lifted his head above the waves of the tempestuous sea and still kept on swimming.

8. *You have put away my acquaintance far from me. You have made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.* This is the utterance of a soul imprisoned in solitary confinement with nobody able to come to it to breathe out consolation. "You have put away my acquaintance far from me. They cannot come to me and I am shut up, and I cannot come forth to them."

9. *My eyes mourn by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon You, I have stretched out my hands unto You.* Now hear how the Psalmist pleads with the Lord! Prayer is always best when it rises to pleading. The man who understands the sacred art of prayer becomes a special pleader with God!

10. *Will You show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah.* "Shall the dead arise and praise You?" Not in this life, though the godly *will* praise the Lord in the world to come. But now, when a Christian dies, God loses a chorister from the choirs of earth—there is one less to sing His praises here—and the Psalmist, therefore, pleads, "Lord, if I live, You can show Your wonders to me; but will You show Your wonders to the dead? If I am alive, I can praise You; but shall the dead arise and praise You?"

11, 12. *Shall Your loving kindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark?*

And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? He pleads that if he dies, he shall not be able to proclaim the mercy of the Lord! God will lose a singer from His earthly choir, a witness from His earthly courts, a testifier of His loving kindness, faithfulness and righteousness.

13. *But unto You have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer come before You.* "I will be up before You come to me. I will be first to approach You. I will salute the rising sun with my rising prayer."

14. *LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?* Note again the earnestness of the Psalmist's pleadings. We have had many of them already—each verse has, I think, had at least two pleadings in it. If You would be heard by God, take care that you reason with Him and press your arguments with the Most High. He delights in this exercise of persevering supplication which will take no denial.

15-18. *I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer Your terrors, I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me. Your terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend have You put far from me and my acquaintance into darkness.* There the Psalm ends. It is a sorrowful wail and it comes to a close when you do not expect it to finish. It really has no finish to it, as when men wind up their songs with proper finales—it is broken off like a lily snapped at the stalk. I have read you this 88th Psalm as an example of persevering prayer. The man who wrote it—"Heman the Ezrahite"—kept on praying even when he did not seem to be heard and thus he is a pattern to us. Yet notice how the next Psalm begins—"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord." It is not always the sorrowful harp that is to be in our hands—we can play the joyous harp as well! "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever." "I will never leave off praising Him." "With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations."

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 450 Spanish translations, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

"A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY"
NO. 2434

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 13, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 1887.

"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it."
Matthew 8:8, 9.

WITHOUT any introduction, as we have just been reading Matthew's record of this notable miracle of our Lord, I shall come at once to the text and, first of all, *work out the incident, itself*, and then, secondly, *make use of its lessons for our own practical purposes*. There is much to be learned from this narrative for our guidance at the present time.

I. First, then, let me WORK OUT THE INCIDENT, ITSELF.

A centurion, the commander of the detachment of Roman forces then placed at Capernaum, had a servant exceedingly ill. He was paralyzed, or palsied, but it was with that kind of paralysis which still leaves room for great pain. He was grievously tormented and yet palsied. This man of war was evidently a good master, thoughtful of his servants, and when he heard that the great Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, had come to town, he made the best of his way to Him and beseeched Him to heal his servant. The centurion did not ask Jesus to come down and heal him, but the Savior at once replied, "I will come and heal him." This was more than the centurion had asked—he had pleaded for the healing of his slave—but he had not expected the personal Presence of the glorious Master!

You remember that on another occasion, a certain nobleman went to Jesus and beseeched him, saying, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus did not go down to the nobleman's child, but He sent His powerful Word and healed him.

In this case, it was a servant, not a child, who was suffering and, as if the Savior would pay the greater attention where the rank was lower, He showed the condescension of His spirit by saying in this instance, "I will come and heal him. I, Myself, will come and undertake the cure that you request of Me." See how the Savior grants more than we ask and also how very tender and considerate He is to the poor and needy! He would not have them think that He despises them and, therefore, while to the *nobleman's* son a gracious word is sent, to the centurion's servant the Lord proffers a gracious *visit*—"I will come and heal him." Jesus is very tender and full of pity. He knows the soreness of human hearts in pov-

erty and sickness and He will not inflict upon them any unnecessary wound. No, He will, as it were, go out of His way by a superior gentleness to those who are of the lowest rank, that He may show that He is no respecter of persons after the manner of men.

Now, look what the centurion does. He had requested the Lord to heal his servant. He is very grateful for the kindness of the Savior in offering to come and heal him, but he is a true gentleman, so he will not put the Savior to any personal inconvenience. He feels that it is not at all necessary that the great Physician should take a journey to his house, so he says to Him, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof; but speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed." The refining power of faith upon the manners of men is very wonderful! Roman centurions were usually rough, bluff fellows who cared for nobody. On many a hard-fought field they received their training for future service and they forced their way up from the ranks, not by competitive examinations, but by blows, cuffs, bruises and wounds.

Yet this officer, being a believer in Jesus Christ, is evidently softened—more or less civilized and cultivated by that very fact! You can notice it often, that the roughest men, the least educated of women, will have about them some of the most gentle and sweetest traits of character when they come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So the centurion says, "My Lord, glad enough would I be of a visit from Your august Majesty, but I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, and it is not necessary for You to do so. You can heal my servant with a single word. Therefore, I pray You, speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed." It is this beautiful, thoughtful, gentlemanly feeling which I cannot too highly recommend, which led him to speak in this way—and what he said is remarkably instructive!

Let me, then, work out the incident in detail.

Notice, first, that *the centurion drew a parallel between himself and the Lord Jesus Christ*. He said, "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me," or, as the Revised Version better renders it, "For I, also, am a man under authority." Some have tried to shift the meaning, here, and to teach that the centurion meant to say, "I am under authority, only a secondary officer, and yet I can do so-and-so. You are not under authority, but great and powerful and, therefore, you can do much more." But that is not the sense at all! The centurion meant that he was, himself, a man under authority, not merely a private individual, but a servant of Caesar! The uniform that he wore marked him out as belonging to one of the legions of the Roman empire! The insignia upon his uniform denoted that he was a centurion, a commander who derived his position and power from the great Emperor at Rome! He was "a man under authority."

It is not to our great Master's dishonor, but quite the opposite, that this centurion meant to say, "I recognize in You, also, a Man under authority," for this blessed Christ of ours had come into the world commissioned by God. He was not here merely in His private capacity, as the Son of David, or as the Son of Mary, or even as the Son of God—He was here as the One whom the Father had chosen, anointed, qualified and

sent to carry out a Divine commission! This officer could see about the Person of Christ the marks of His being commissioned by God. By some means, I know not how, he had arrived at this very safe and true conclusion, that Jesus Christ was acting under the authority of the great God who made Heaven and earth! And he looked at Him, therefore, under that aspect—as duly authorized and commissioned for His work.

Now go a step further. He who is commissioned to perform any work is also *provided by the superior authority with the power to carry out that work*. A centurion, therefore, has soldiers under him. "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me—men put under me for the carrying out of my commands—because my commands are authorized by the superior authority of Caesar." So this man seems to say to Christ, "I believe that You are provided with due assistance for the carrying out of all the purposes for which You have come into the world. If I have an order to send," he said, "I say to my servant, 'Go,' and he goes. If I want another to come, I say, 'Come,' and he comes. If there is something to be done, I summon one of the men under my authority and I say to him, 'Do this,' and he does it." He seems to say to the Savior, "You, also, commissioned and appointed of the great God, must have had servants appointed to wait upon You. You are not sent to a warfare at Your own charges. You are not left to do this work alone. There must be, somewhere about, though I perceive them not, soldiers under You, and servants under You who wait to do Your bidding." You catch that idea, do you not? The parallel is very clear and I do not wonder that the Savior greatly admired the man's faith which had enabled him to perceive this great Truth of God!

The centurion went, therefore, a step further in his argument. "I, a man duly commissioned, have under me servants to carry out my will, and *these servants of mine I keep well in hand*." You know that there are masters who have servants to whom they say, "Go," and they do *not* go, or to whom they say, "Come," and they do *not* come—at least, they do not come very quickly! They must say, "Come," or, "Go," several times before the servants actually do come or go. And there are masters who may say, "Do this," and they may again say, "Do this," and they may yet, again, say, "Do this," but it is not done! But this centurion was a man who knew how to manage men. He was a master, a real master—not in name, only, but in fact. He did not, within his domain, tolerate anything like delay. He said to Christ, "I say, 'Go,' and they go, or, 'Come,' and they come." He did not allow anything like mutiny or the resistance of his will. He had his whole household so well in hand that when he said to his servant, "Do this," he did it. This is the right kind of master and servants, in the long run, like a master who will be obeyed. The centurion was a disciplinarian of that sort, as kind as the sunlight, for he sought Christ's aid for his sick servant, but also as true and firm as steel, so that, what he said was to be done, was to be done, and done at once!

He transfers that characteristic to the Savior. He does not, he *cannot*, do Christ the discredit of supposing that He has not His household well in hand—that He has servants who dare to trifle with His commands—that there are agencies which have broken loose from beneath His rule

and will go whichever way they please. "No," he says, "Savior, commissioned of the Father, You have Your soldiers and Your servants, and I believe that You have them under such control and subject to such discipline that You have but to speak, and the act You order is done, or to command, and it stands fast forever." I trust that none of us would dishonor the Savior by questioning the Truth of this parallel which the centurion so thoughtfully drew.

Once more, the centurion went a little further and implied that, as Christ had the power to perform the Divine Will and had that power well in hand, *he believed He was willing to direct all that power to the one objective of healing his servant*. I believe that many of you know that the Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty. You do not doubt that fact, but the question is—Is He Almighty to save *you*? You do not doubt that, if the Savior wills it, He can make your spirit whole, but you ask—Will He will it? Will He turn that power in our direction? It does not enter into the centurion's head that there will be any difficulty in his case. "No," he seems to say, "King of Kings, Omnipotent Master and Lord, You can, at once, direct an angel to fly to my servant, or You can bid the disease quit my dwelling, or You can speak to the palsy and the palsy, itself, will be *Your* servant and will fly away at once at Your command. You have only to put forth Your power upon my servant and he will at once be healed."

I want you to believe, dear Hearts, that our Lord Jesus Christ, no longer here in the flesh, but risen from the dead, is clothed with power equal to that which He had in the centurion's day! No, that He is clothed with even *greater* power, for after His Resurrection He said, "All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth." And then I want you to believe that He is prepared to turn all that power in *your* direction so as to work for *your* deliverance from spiritual death, *your* rescue from the power of sin, *your* help in the way of Providence, *your* guidance in the way of wisdom, or whatever, out of ten thousand things, may happen to be the need of this present moment! Oh, that He, who gave such faith as this to the centurion at Capernaum, would give like precious faith to many of you, that you, also, may glorify and bless His holy name!

Now observe that there was only one further thing which was on this centurion's mind, and that was this. He looked upon Christ as a Master over all kinds of powers, powers sufficient for all His purposes. He looked at Him as having them all well in hand, so that He could have His own bidding done in a moment, and *he was anxious to keep his own place*. You ask me how I know this. I am sure it was so because, when the Savior was willing to come down to his house, he shrank from having such an honor conferred upon him! He seemed to feel that he was being put into a wrong position. He was, himself, only a servant, and he felt that, in the particular character which he was then bearing, he was not worthy that his master should come under his roof. So he said, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

I think that this is the principal thing you and I have to do. When we think about our Lord Jesus Christ, we need not worry ourselves about how He will effect His purposes—how the decrees of God will be carried

out, or how His promises will be fulfilled. The principal thing we have to do is this—to be, ourselves, the Lord's servants. And when He says to any of us, "Go," to mind that we go, and when He says, "Come," to see that we come, and when He says, "Do this," to be sure that we do it! You would rule the seas? You had better rule *yourself*. You would purge the Church? You had better see to it that your own heart is purged! You would reform the world? Out with you! What have *you* to do with reforming the world till you have first washed your own hands in innocence? Get to your right place and do your own work and it shall be well with you. What are you, after all, but as a tiny worker on a little anthill? You have your one grain of wheat to carry and that is enough for you—do not worry yourself about all the concerns of the anthill! If you do, at least do not fret yourself about the whole planet on which you live, still less about the complete solar system, for what can you do with it if you worry you poor antship even unto death? No, but do your little share of work upon your own anthill! Carry your own grain of wheat to the general store so you shall have answered the purpose of your being and it shall be well with you. May God, even our Lord Jesus Christ, give us the Grace to set Him up very high as Lord and Master, full of power, wisdom and love—and then to set ourselves down very low and to ask that, as His servants, we may serve Him faithfully all the days of our life!

Thus I have, as best I could, worked out the incident, itself.

II. Now, secondly, I want to MAKE USE OF ITS LESSONS FOR OUR OWN PRACTICAL PURPOSES.

First, then, dear Friends, it seems to me that this little narrative should be used to urge us to *believe in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, even if He does not speedily come in the Glory of the Second Advent*. I am frequently talking with Christian friends about these evil days in which we live and of the mischief of the times in which our lot is cast. Certainly, it is not a very cheering subject, and generally I find that friends wind up with some such remark as this—"Well, the comfort is that the Lord Jesus Christ will come very soon. The defections in the professing Church, the blasphemies of the world—are they not among the special tokens that the end is hastening on? When our Lord comes, then all these difficult problems will be solved and all that grieves us will come to an end." Yes, yes, all that I fully believe, and I look upon the Second glorious Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ as the brightest hope of His Church.

But, still, do you not think that a more practical and a more *God-honoring faith* would say, without putting aside the blessed hope of the Second Advent, "Yet the Lord Jesus Christ can deal with the present evils of the Church and of the world without actually coming into our midst." He can say a word while yet remaining in the highest heavens and the splendors of the sacred worship of the New Jerusalem! He can speak a word, there, and so effect His purpose *here*. Does not that Truth of God seem to flow naturally out of the faith of this centurion? Our blessed Lord, there is no need that You should, at present, rend the heavens and, in majesty, come down! There is no need that You should literally touch the hills and make them smoke, and that the glory of Your Divine

Presence should consume Your adversaries! If it so pleases You, You can do Your bidding where You are, without disturbing this dispensation, without even working a miracle, allowing things to take their usual course and yet accomplishing Your supreme purposes!

Beloved, I want you to exercise this faith continually. You are, perhaps, in a little Church, and when that goes to the bad, you say, "Oh, well, we cannot make it better! We must wait till the Lord comes." Not a bit of it! Begin to stir up His strength now, for He can work *before* that Second Advent, and work right gloriously, too! You turn over the newspaper, and you say, "I am weary and well near sick unto death of all this evil." Yes, and so am I, but what then? "Oh," you answer, "we had better go upstairs to bed and wait till the Lord comes." Not at all! Let us go and sharpen our swords and attack the enemies of our Lord more earnestly than ever! We will yet have another battle or two before He comes! Who knows how long He may tarry?

But, whether He tarries or whether He comes soon, let us not be at all disquieted, as though His power could not be seen apart from His Second Advent! The power is given to Him in Heaven and in earth. Even *now* the name of Jesus is "high over all." He is *now* the great attraction to men, the great destroyer of Satan! Let us not begin, then, to think little of our absent Lord's present power, and to hang all our hopes upon His literal Presence among us! I say, again, that I am not depreciating that glorious coming of His—God forbid that I should do so! It is still our grandest hope! But let us not put it out of its place so as to make us at all despondent or distrustful about what our risen Lord is able to do for us even now! He can still do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

I want you, next, dear Friends, *to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ's unseen servants*. You look around, or you look abroad and try to find men who shall proclaim the Gospel vigorously during the next 20 years—and you say you cannot perceive them. No, nor do I. Now think a moment—when this centurion saw Jesus of Nazareth standing in the midst of His disciples, what did he see? He saw a lowly-looking Man—in appearance very much like other men, but certainly not attended by any court, or guarded by any soldiers! Yet he believed, concerning this Man, that He was surrounded by invisible bands who, in a moment, would do His bidding! I want you to think thus of your Lord. At this day, the Christ of God on earth is attended by all the servants that He needs for His great cause. The scoffers say, "Ah, the old Truth is dying out! Where can they find men of mind to preach it?" But our eyes, enlightened by *faith*, can see a great multitude who shall publish the same old Truth of God until Christ shall come! The mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha—there shall yet be found myriads of burning spirits to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ until He comes again!

I like that couplet—

"Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere."

You cannot see them, but they are waiting for their Lord's orders, and *He* can see them! He knows where He has put them and when He will call

them to Himself and bid them do His work! Therefore, let us not be in the least disheartened or discouraged because of what we see, or what we do *not* see. Let us rely upon the invisible—let us *expect* the unexpected! Yes, I *meant* to say, let us *expect* the unexpected. That which we cannot dream of as possible or probable, let us, nevertheless, believe shall be done, for God must be true, Christ cannot be defeated, Calvary never will and never can become, in any measure, a defeat! The death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, must accomplish the purposes for which it was worked out. Let us rest assured, then, that He has His servants waiting to do His bidding.

Now apply this subject a little more closely. I wish that some poor soul would even now *believe that the Lord Jesus Christ could save him at once with a single word*. I know you are apt to think that the conversion of men must be worked in some very particular and special way. Pictorial and descriptive accounts of striking conversions have been repeated so often that many people get the idea that the *scenery* is necessary to the effect! But I want you to put all such ideas away from your thoughts. If you needed any scenery, it is here before your eyes, but you do not need it. Otherwise, for a preacher to stand in this dense heat in the midst of 6,000 immortal souls is scenery enough for anyone who needs something striking! And if the Lord shall come to you and in a moment save you, there will be quite enough of the special and the particular in the mere fact that you are the subject of the Lord's mighty working! But I want you to believe that this work of Divine Grace upon the soul has not to do with any particular position in which a man is found. The Lord Jesus Christ can save a man when he is in bed, when he is putting on his clothes, when he is walking the street, when he is at his business, or when he is not at his business, but indulging in sin! I could give many instances to show that there is nothing needed in the way of peculiarity of position in order for Christ to save.

When you are at home, you say to your servant, "Mary, go to such and such a place," and Mary goes. Or you say, "Sarah, come here," and Sarah comes. If there is anything to be done, you say, "Jane, do this," and she does it. Yet you do not put a paragraph in the newspaper saying, "Here, on the second day of October, 1887, Jane So-and-So made a cup of tea for her mistress." It is such a usual and ordinary thing in context with the duties of the household, is it not? Very well, just so is the work of conversion in context with the Church of Christ! Jesus, Himself, has but to speak the word and the great work is straightway done! The surroundings of the sinner do not matter at all to Him. He can now, under the present circumstances in which you are, come to you and pluck you out of death into life—out of darkness into light! Out of all your wanderings He can bring you home at once. If you truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are born of God. If you now, at this very moment, trust Christ with your soul, you have passed from death unto life! If, at this instant, you will have done with every other hope and just come and rest yourself upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, the Savior, you, John, Thomas, Mary, Jane, Sarah—whoever you may be—you are saved! I put it in a

very homely way just now, intentionally, for I want to bring it down to this point—that, just as the centurion said, "I have only to say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it," so has Christ only to speak the effectual word of His Grace, and the devil will fly, sin will be removed, Grace will be infused and the soul will be saved! Oh, what a mercy this is!

To you who are the people of God I would apply this subject in this way. If it is as I have said concerning the sinner, that he must trust in Christ if he is to be saved, it is also true that you should *believe for your servants, your friends and your acquaintances*. Your children are still unconverted—have you ever prayed for them, believing in the power of Jesus Christ to convert them? One said, the other day, of a certain person, "It seems no use praying for such a fellow as that." Of course it is no use to pray such prayers as *you* would be likely to present if you talk like that! When you have given a person up, and you have no further hope concerning him, what *prayer* can *you* offer for him? I want you, my Brother, my Sister, to believe, concerning your child, your brother, your friend, your unconverted neighbor, just as this centurion believed concerning his sick servant—that Jesus had but to speak the word and his sick servant would be healed!

"Oh, but the doctor says that this is a case of paralysis! He says that he will never get over it. It is impossible for him to be cured—the disease is complicated in such a peculiar way that we must give up all hope." Ah, but this centurion does not look at the *patient*! He looks at the *Physician*! and he says, and says rightly, "Jesus can as easily bid this disease depart as I can bid my servant go when I wish him to start upon an errand." Think not of the sinner, or of the greatness of his sin, but think of the greatness of the Savior! I am sure that if we preached with more faith in Christ, we would see more results. Perhaps you do not see conversions in your work because you keep looking to the people—looking to the sinners—looking to the hardness of their hearts. What has all that to do with Christ's power to save? If this man, in addition to being paralyzed, could have had fever, leprosy, dropsy and all other diseases at once, it would not have mattered in the least to the great Physician, for when Christ comes on the scene, if you have one impossibility, He can meet it, and if you have 50 impossibilities, He can meet them all just as easily! Granted an Almighty Savior, what room is there for doubt as to what He can do?

I wish I could drive this Truth of God home into some who have been praying for others, but who have never prayed the prayer of *faith*. It is the prayer of *faith* that saves the sick! It is the prayer of faith that saves the sinful! It is the prayer of faith that makes everything of Christ and takes Him at His right valuation as being a Master of every situation! That is what you should do—make Jesus Christ Master of the situation and plead with Him in that capacity, and you shall not plead in vain, and your child, your friend, your servant shall yet be saved.

Let the practical close of this evening's meditation be that we *believe in Jesus a great deal more than we have ever believed before*. If we have believed in Jesus, let us have still more confidence in Him. I think it is a

sad pity when a man preaches the Gospel with a doubt at the back of his throat. What good can come of his preaching? They sometimes charge us with dogmatism. We would be *more dogmatic* if we could be, for we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen! And if men receive not our witness, we cannot help that. We cannot change our witness because men do not care to receive it! Go forth, minister of God, and preach the Gospel as a *certainty*—and you shall *prove* it to be a certainty! If you preach it as a something which *may or may not* be true, it will paralyze you—and it will not profit your hearers! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I claim from every man to whom I preach that he should believe in Him, accept His great salvation and bow before Him! If you do so, dear Friends, you shall be saved! But if you will not, it is not left as a matter of choice with you—the Lord Jesus has, Himself, declared, "He that believes not shall be damned." He will not allow us to trifle with Him! He is a Sovereign, He is the King of Kings, and Lord of lords and He calls upon us to kiss His feet, bow down before Him and acknowledge Him as our Lord and God!

Our chief business just now is not so much to think of what Christ can do in the great battle of the present, or what He will do in the dread conflict of the future, but of what *we* have to do, and I think that what we have to do is *to so believe in Christ as to be His obedient servants*. If He says, "Go," let us go! If He says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden," let us come unto Him! If He says concerning any service, "Do this," let us do it! And if, instead of bidding us do anything, He bids us *believe* Him, let us come and believe Him—for this will be our wisdom, this will be our happiness, this will be our Heaven—to be the obedient servants of Him who must be Ruler over all! God has decreed that this shall be His Glory—He set Him on His Throne expecting till His foes be made His footstool. If you choose to be His enemies, you shall choose it to your own destruction! But if you will come and bow before Him and be His servants, you shall find that Heaven and earth are waiting at His back to bless you—and you shall go from strength to strength beneath His loving and unfailing care!

The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8:1-27.

Verses 1, 2. *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him.* Great multitudes often count for nothing—it is, here or there, *one* who is the notable individual. There may be a great company come up outwardly to worship, but it is the soul that comes into contact with Christ that is the most worthy of observation. There is no, "Behold!" when the great multitudes are mentioned by Matthew. But there is a, "Behold!" before the record of the leper coming to Christ—"Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him." Let us all be of the leper's mind! Let us worship Christ! Surely we may do so, if only out of gratitude for having escaped

from so dire a disease, but, inasmuch as, spiritually, by nature that disease is upon us, we have good reason to come to Jesus as the "leper came and worshipped Him"—

2, 3. *Saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Come, then, to Christ, even though your faith is very incomplete! There may be, as there was with the leper, an, "if," about it, and an, "if," about a very vital point, namely, concerning the Master's willingness, but He will shut His eyes to that imperfection and only look at that part of your faith which is acceptable to Him, that is, your faith in His *power*. "You can make me clean," said the leper, and Christ dealt with him upon the terms of that, "You can." And as to the, "If You will," He blotted that out by saying, "I will; be you clean." So, sinner, come to Jesus, even though the doubting phrase, "If You will," shall still linger on your lips. If the leprosy shall show itself even there, in your unbelief as to Christ's willingness to cleanse you, yet come to Him and He will say to You, "I will; be you clean," and it shall be with you as it was with the leper—"immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

4. *And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man.* He will never say that to you or to me, but while He was here on earth, our Lord was very modest and retiring. He wished to conceal Himself as much as possible. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He sets us an example of what true power is, for true power does not flaunt itself before the eyes of men, or advertise itself at every corner of the street—it longs rather to conceal itself, being well aware that it will have all the publicity that is necessary—for such wonders cannot be hid.

4. *But go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* The man was to make his cleansing known in the legal way. Our Lord Jesus Christ was very scrupulous to observe the Law while it still stood and we, also, should take care not to observe that ceremonialism which has passed away, but diligently to keep that which still is of Divine authority and of present force.

5. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion.* There came, doubtless, a great number of people when Jesus entered into Capernaum, but Matthew does not mention them. Yet he does say, "There came unto Him a centurion." Notice how these *individuals* are brought out by the Scriptural narrative—"a leper"—"a centurion." May there not also be some here who will come to Jesus and prove in their own persons, or in the persons of others for whom they shall pray, His power to bless and save? The Lord grant it!

5-8. *Beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof.* What a blessed thing it is to have that sense of unworthiness! Some are very flippant in the expression of their piety. After they have heard half-a-dozen sermons, they attain to perfect holiness! I wish that they were half as deeply *humbled* and knew half as much of themselves as this centurion did! "Lord, I am not worthy." That

is a good lesson for anyone to learn. Still, when we can say, "Lord, we are not worthy," do not let us, therefore, think that Christ may not come to us. Let us ask Him to come whatever we may be, for our lack of worthiness must not stint or limit the condescension of our Divine Master. However, in this case, albeit that the centurion seemed almost to decline the privilege of having Christ come under his roof, yet he gave to Jesus high honor by believing in the power of His word even without His Presence

8, 9. *But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority.* He was, therefore, only a subordinate officer, for he was subject to his superiors.

9. *Having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.* He left the Savior to infer what he meant, namely, that Christ, who acted under the authority of God, could readily speak to palsies and fevers, and say to them, "Go," and they would go just as quickly as a soldier would obey his officer's command. Brother, you are a Christian and you have known the Lord for 20 years—have you as much faith as this Roman centurion had? Do you believe that your Master's word can remove sickness, that He can clear difficulties, that He can supply needs, that He can break bonds, that He can send, by whichever angel or man He chooses, whatever blessing He pleases? Oh, that we did all believe as truly as this man did!

10-12. *When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Some of the rank outsiders shall be brought in by rich mercy, while others, piously trained, nursed at the very gates of the Church, shall, nevertheless, for lack of faith in Christ, be utterly cast away!

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the same hour.* Oh, pray for your friends, pray for your children, pray for your servants! And if you have faith like that of the centurion, according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you!

14, 15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.* Peter had a wife, you see. Romanists say that he was the first "pope," therefore the first pope had a wife and, mark you, if other popes had had wives, there would not have been any declaration of "infallibility," for there is no man who will believe himself to be infallible if he has someone near enough to remind him that he is not! But one evil usually goes with another—so it is recorded here that Peter had a wife as a kind of incidental rebuke of the sin of compulsory celibacy that was yet to be committed by priests and "popes"!

16. *When the evening 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.* Was not that centurion a kind of prophet? He had not long spoken about Christ's command over this man and that before Christ had an opportunity of putting His words to the test, Jesus cast out devils, and cast out sicknesses—

17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.* That is an amazing quotation and it teaches us that Christ has power to heal because He "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." Am I not to understand, from the context, here, that Jesus Christ's power is to be seen in His suffering, in His humiliation and especially in His wounds and in His death? He would have had no power to meet our maladies if He had not, Himself been compassed with infirmities for our sake! O blessed Master, You teach us where power lies—not in grandeur, but in self-sacrifice! Not in personal glory, but in personal humiliation!

18-24. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said unto 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. And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead. And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea.* We may go where Christ goes and yet we may get into danger! Never judge the rightness of your path by the Providence which attends it. You may have safe sailing to the *port of destruction* and you may have a rough voyage when you are bound for Heaven! "When He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea"—

24. *Insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep.* Weary with His toil, He lay down to rest. There was His *Humanity* serenely confident and, therefore, sleeping through the storm! There was the Glory of His innocence—"He was asleep." And there was also the majesty of His Deity, only waiting for the moment when He should arise and still the tumult of the winds and waves.

25-27. *And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish! And He said to them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* Glory be to His blessed name! 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.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS
NO. 2435

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 20, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 6, 1887.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms."
Deuteronomy 33:27.

This short passage is found in the midst of a mass of gold—sentences containing the richest treasures of the Truth of God. All this spiritual wealth is the heritage of the people of God—not only of His typical people to whom these words were spoken, but to His real people, the true seed of Abraham, those who are the believing children of the Father of all Believers. If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may take these precious words home to yourself—and you may live upon them—you may eat the fat, drink the sweet and rejoice in all the refreshment that they bring to your spirit!

In the four verses, from the 26th to the 29th, notice how near God is said to be to His people. He is described as being *above us*, arching us over with His Divine Power—"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the Heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds." Faith can hear the tramp of the celestial cavalry above our heads! We who trust in the Lord are always safe, for the angels of God are looking down upon us from the battlements of Heaven, ready to show themselves strong on our behalf as soon as their presence is needed by us. Then, our text tells us of God *beneath us*. As He is above us in the heavens, so underneath us are the everlasting arms. The next sentence shows us God *before us*—"and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them." And the remaining verses of the chapter represent Him as being all *around us*, so that we are encompassed with God—not only with His Presence, with which He fills Heaven, earth and all deep places—but with the glorious Presence of His mighty love. He is above, beneath, before, and all around us! He never forsakes us, for in Him we live, move, and have our being. Let us rejoice, therefore, in our Lord's nearness!

I. Now, coming to our text, I want, as God's Spirit shall help me, to bring to your notice, first, THE QUARTER THAT IS THUS HONORABLY SECURED—Underneath.

"Underneath." Well, in the first place, that is *the point of mysterious assault*. We look for the attacks of the powers of darkness from underneath. They are very remarkable attacks—there are many who are the objects of them, but there are few who fully understand them. There are many of God's children who are often sorely vexed by Satan, yet *they do not know that it is the devil who is troubling them*. They blame themselves for thoughts that are none of their own, but which come up from the in-

fernal Pit like smoke and sparks from that dread lower world. O Friends, if Satan has ever grievously tempted and assailed you, you will dread beyond expression any repetition of that temptation or assault! Mr. Bunyan well says that a man had better go over hedge and ditch—and many miles round about—rather than meet this terrible adversary! He not only works through the world and through the flesh, but he has modes of personal attack—fiery darts from his own hands—false accusations and foul insinuations which come only from him. By all these he assails Christians and brings us to a stand so that, sometimes, we know not what to do! Just underneath us there seems to yawn the awful Pit, out of which Satan rises with his abandoned fallen angels, to do us mischief.

Then comes in this gracious assurance—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." Against this mysterious, because incomprehensible foe, whose darts are so painful and deadly, God has been pleased to set a shield. And He puts underneath you, O child of God, His everlasting arms! You may be tempted by Satan, but it shall only be in a measure—God will not let him put forth all his diabolical strength! When the Lord suffered Satan to tempt Job, there was always a proviso, which said to the devil as to the raging sea, "Hitherto shall you come, but no further." The Lord pulled him up short just at the point where he hoped to destroy the good man—and it shall be so with you, also, tried Believer. Underneath you, in your worst attacks from Satan, shall be the everlasting arms of the Lord Himself!

Note a second meaning of this word, "underneath." That is *the place of our daily pilgrimage*. To the Israelites, "underneath" was the burning sand of the terrible wilderness. Sometimes, "underneath," were the fiery serpents and all manner of evil things, so that their march towards Canaan was a continual trial to them. "But," says God to His people, "though sense sees nothing underneath but ever-burning sands, let *faith* see underneath the everlasting arms." Some of you go forth to your daily labors and you find the place of your service to be a real wilderness, full of trial and everything that is unpleasant to you. Yet look again, with eyes touched with Heaven's eye-salve and, instead of seeing the bitter poverty, and the grinding toil, and the daily trial, you will begin to see that God is in it all and, "underneath are the everlasting arms!" You shall go cheerfully home to Heaven, borne up by God. He who made you will carry you! He who loves you will bear you all the days of old till you shall come unto the Mountain of God and stand in your lot at the end of the days! I think, therefore, that our text applies not only to the point of mysterious assault, but to the place of daily pilgrimage and toil.

Do you not think that this word, "underneath," also relates to *the place of perilous descent*? There are times in a man's life when he has to come down. It is not a very easy matter to go down the hill safely. Some persons have proved that it is difficult to grow old gracefully, but to the Christian it ought not to be impossible or unusual to grow old graciously. Still, there are difficulties about that coming down the hill of life—coming down in a very material sense, perhaps, from competence to real poverty. Coming down as to your mental powers. Being conscious of losing your former influence over your fellows. Coming down in general repute, through no fault of your own, but through circumstances of which you

are not the master. All this is very trying to human nature. You know that on the way to Heaven there are many Hill Difficulties—and brave spirits rather enjoy climbing to the top of them! We like a craggy path, hard and rough, where we can keep on looking upward all the way even if we have to scramble on our hands and knees. There is something pleasant in going up in that fashion, but it is when going down into the Valley of Humiliation that we are apt to slip. We do not like going down and, as many horses fall at the bottom of the hill, so I believe that many people trip at the end of a trial when they think it is nearly over and they have no need to look so carefully to their feet.

Well now, dear Friends, if any of you are going down the hill, I think the text comes in very sweetly—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." You cannot go so low but that God's arms of love are still lower! You get poorer and poorer, but, "underneath are the everlasting arms." You get older and feebler. Your ears are failing, your eyes are growing dim, but, "underneath are the everlasting arms." By-and-by, unless the Lord speedily returns, you will have to die—and you will come down very low, then—but still it will be true, "underneath are the everlasting arms."

Further, I think that we may use the text as referring *to a matter of intense concern*. Sometimes we say to one another, "Is our religion real? We trust we love the Lord, but do we *really* love Him? We think we are reposing in Christ, but are we *really* doing so? We have a measure of joy and peace—does it *really* come through believing in Jesus, or is it a delusion of the flesh or of the devil? We have, so far, come a long way in the heavenly trail, but are we really going towards Heaven, or is it all a mistake?"

It is a good thing, occasionally, Brothers and Sisters, to look underneath. He who never sees what is under him may have great cause to do so. Examine your foundations—see what your cornerstones are, for if you should be building on the sand, then, in the time of storm, your fine building will be all swept away! It is a grand thing if we can find this text to be true—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." I dig through my experience and, "underneath are the everlasting arms." I question my joys. I examine myself about my sorrows, but do I come down on the purposes of God, the Immutable faithfulness of the Most High, the eternal Truths of God revealed in Scripture? Do I come down upon the everlasting arms? If so, I am resting where the whole universe may rest—I am resting on a faithful God and I need not be afraid! Do not fear to examine yourself! If you do, there is, perhaps, all the graver need for the testing and trying. Search and look, and go to the bottom of these matters. Happy shall you be if, diving to the very depths, you can say, "Yes, underneath are the everlasting arms."

I shall use this first word of my text in one more way. I think we have, here, *the secret of singular discoveries that will yet be made*. We do not at present know the reality of things—we judge according to our feelings and by the sight of our eyes—how else can we judge? But the day will come when things will appear very differently from what they do now. There is a huge trouble which has mastered us for years—it has seemed, with its dense shadow, to darken our heavenly way for a great length of time—but the day will come when we shall look through that trouble and we shall find that "underneath are the everlasting arms." Perhaps some

of us are in sore perplexity. We cannot understand the Lord's Providential dealings with us. He does not always tell us the reason for His actions—we might not understand it if He did—but we may rest assured that He is working out purposes of Infinite Love! He ceases not to care for us even when things appear to be at their very worst. I bear my willing witness to the faithfulness of God! I am not as old as some, but I am old enough to have gone through fire and water, and I am here to testify that I have not been burned by the one, nor drowned by the other! Cannot many of you say the same? In your sorest trials and in your hottest furnaces, has He not been especially present with you and bestowed great blessings upon you? 'Tis even so! Then trust Him, you saints, for what His Word assures you is gloriously true—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Go deeper down. Look further into the real reason of things than you have been accustomed to do and you shall come on this solid foundation—that God is working out for you infinite and eternal blessedness by these light afflictions which are but for a moment.

II. Now, secondly, let us note THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS QUARTER IS SECURED—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

The everlasting arms are there and that means, first of all, that *God Himself is close to us*, guaranteeing the eternal safety of all those who trust in Him. Of course, where any of his elect arms are, there He is, and God is not divided from His own arms. This is our joy and comfort that God is with us! What strength it gives to faith to believe that God is present! Even the false prophet, Mohammed, had a strong faith in god—in Allah—and when he fled for the first time and hid in a cave with only one friend, his companion said to him, "Our pursuers are after us and there are only two of us." "Stop," exclaimed Mohammed, "there are three, for Allah is here!" It was the utterance of a brave and grand faith—would that his whole career had been in harmony with it! Wherever there are two of God's people, there is *Another* with them, for God is there. We do not count Him in as we ought to do, yet, if we were wise, we would put ourselves down as only ciphers and say, "*Nobody* is there till HE is there! He is the one true, personal Numeral that multiplies all these ciphers indefinitely."

Mr. Wesley said, as he died, "The best of all is, God is with us." And that *is* the best of all, is it not? Underneath is God, Himself. He who made the heavens and the earth cannot forsake those who do not forsake Him. If you love Him. If you trust in Him, He might as soon *cease to be,* as fail anyone who is relying upon Him. This is the glory of Jehovah, that while the gods of the heathen are worthless idols, our God hears prayer and answers the cry of His people! Try Him and see if it is not so. Blessed are they who trust in Jehovah, for they shall find in the living God help in every time of need, and sufficient strength for every day of trial! So, then, we see that what might appear to us as the dark abyss, the dreary, mysterious underworld, is all guarded by Jehovah, Himself—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Our text also means that *the Lord's Immutable Purpose is being fulfilled.* Where God's arms are, He is at work, and He is at work accomplishing His purposes of Grace. The text speaks of everlasting arms—that

is a strength that never fails and never turns aside from the purpose to which it has bound itself. O child of God, down deep where you cannot see it, the Divine Power of the Eternal Godhead is always at work for you! The arms of God are busy on your behalf! He has made them bare to show Himself strong in your defense! You can be sure of this! God has a purpose of love to all who believe in Him—and that purpose of love shall stand fast to all eternity! Whatever changes there may be in the appearance of this world and in the great universe of which it forms a part, there shall be no change in the Infinite resolve of God to bless His people and preserve them to the end. Why, Believer, be of good comfort, and say to yourself, "At the bottom of everything that happens to me, there is the Immutable Purpose of God and God, Himself, working it out!"

Beside the Lord's Immutable Purpose and His Infinite Power by which God is at work for you at all times, our text means that *His inexhaustible patience is waiting its time*. "Underneath are the everlasting arms" bearing up your load, sustaining it with long endurance while He keeps on working for you—invisible, yet always active on your behalf. Do you expect to *see* your God on this side Heaven? If so, you will be disappointed! Are you willing to walk by faith and not by sight? If so, you shall have a double blessing, for, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Oh, that the Holy Spirit of God would bring you to this point! Having trusted God in the Person of His dear Son. Having laid the whole weight of your eternal interests upon Him whom God has revealed to be your Savior, you may leave them there in perfect safety, without a moment's care or anxiety! God's everlasting arms must carry out God's eternal purposes. Not one of His promises can fall to the ground, for, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?" It is *God Himself* who undertakes to bear you up, and bear you through—therefore rest assured that He will do it!

III. I must not speak longer upon that matter, for I must say just a little upon the third point. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THIS TEXT IS VERY PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

One of these times is, I think, *when we are very sick and very feeble*. The pillows have been fluffed up for you and made as soft as they can be. And the bed, which is so apt to grow hard, has been tenderly smoothed by kind fingers, yet you sink back as if you were about to die of exhaustion! Sink back, then! Be not afraid, for, "underneath are the everlasting arms." Perhaps there comes a faintness over you and you seem to be sinking, sinking—you know not where—still, "underneath are the everlasting arms!" You try to rise, but you cannot. You would clutch at something by which you think you might get back to activity, but you fall back into the same state of weary languor and pain. Well, but still, "underneath are the everlasting arms!" It is delightful to feel that our feebleness encroaches upon Omnipotence—that just when there is nothing left to us—then God comes in with all His fullness and bears us up! He is always faithful and full of compassion—He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men—so, when He must grieve them, it is *then* that He displays His special power to strengthen and sustain them. Go home to your bed, if so it must be with you. If there are wearisome months of

sickness and disease awaiting you, go home and carry this text with you—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Is not this Word of God very sweet, too, *when burdened with sore troubles, or oppressed with heavy labors*? You feel that you need double strength and you say, "I cannot keep on any longer. There is too much for mortal powers to endure, I cannot bear up under these repeated trials. The last time I felt thus, I thought that I had no strength left, and now this feeling comes over me again—what shall I do? I am thrown down, I am crushed as though men were riding over my head! I seem to be cast out like the mire in the streets." Yes, but still, "underneath are the everlasting arms." We sang, just now—

"As your day, your strength shall be."

Is that truth or fiction? Ask God's people as to their past experience and they will set to their seal that God is true! And you, too, shall find it true. Oh, how wondrously God's saints have been borne up under persecution—and cheerful and glad under oppression! The sweetest songs that ever were heard on earth were sung behind prison bars! Perhaps I shall not be wrong when I say that the most wonderful joys that ever were felt by mortal hearts have been felt by men and women who, on the morrow, were to be burned at the stake—but whose very souls have danced within them because of the unspeakable delight which the Presence of God has given them!

I think it was Socrates who said, "Philosophers could be merry without music." I take the statement from his mouth and alter it, and say, Christians can be happy without happy circumstances! They can, sometimes, like nightingales, sing best in dark nights. Their joy is not mere outward mirth. Sorrows fall upon them, yet, from the deep that lies underneath wells up yet more exceeding joy! Yes, "underneath are the everlasting arms," and when we can no longer stand, it is a blessed thing to lean or fall back on them!

I have already told you that another time when this text is very sweet is *when you are going down hill.* And some of you may be going down hill pretty fast just now. Never mind—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." When you come down the hill of old age, you know what lies at the bottom. Why, then, go up again, higher than you ever went before, renewing your youth and being forever with the Well-Beloved!

So, dear Friends, I may change the application of my text, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," and pass it on to *those who are all trembling and shaking*. Some of you, perhaps, know what I mean. That young man has begun to preach a little, but he says, "I fear that I shall break down." Dear Brother, if you get a message from God to tell, then tell it, and do not be afraid, for, "underneath are the everlasting arms." You are seeking to gather a few young people together and you are trying to bless them, but you feel your own weakness so much that you say, "I know I shall make a failure of it." Do not say so, for, "underneath are the everlasting arms!" He who helps us when we go down, down, down, is equally ready to do so when we are going up in His service! When our ardent zeal is bearing us forward to do something more for the Lord than we are quite equal to, then, "underneath are the everlasting arms." And if you are seeking greater holiness, daring to indulge a loftier joy—if you are

trying to sing some of those hymns which, a few months ago, you thought were pitched in too high a key for you—be bold and daring! Your wing feathers will grow by your very attempt to fly! The possibilities of Grace are boundless—leave yourself to them. Be not always weak and trembling. God help you to become as a David, and you who are as David, to become as an angel of the Lord!

Once more, the hour will come *when everything will begin to melt away beneath your feet*. Earthly comforts will fail you, friends will be unable to help you—they can wipe the clammy sweat from your brow and moisten your lips with a drop of water—but they cannot go with you on the great voyage upon which you are about to be launched. When heart and flesh fail, then may the Lord speak to you the sweet words before us, "Underneath are the everlasting arms!" It will be a sinking to the flesh, but a rising to the spirit! Underneath dying saints there is the living God! Be not afraid, therefore, even to die, for, to the Christian, "to die is gain." I remember, at a funeral, when we laid the body of one of God's saints in the grave, a dear minister prayed, "Lord, we thank You that though our dear friend has come so low as to be in his grave, he cannot go any lower, for, 'underneath are the everlasting arms,' and in due time You will bring him up, again, in those everlasting arms, raised in the likeness of his Lord."

That is true of all Believers! Therefore let this text come sweetly home to your heart—"Underneath are the everlasting arms."

I must conclude with this remark. There are some here who are net yet saved. I would illustrate the way of salvation to you by this text. You are hoping to save yourself. You are depending upon something that you have *done*, or that you have *felt*. I want you to let all that go, to give up every hope you have that comes out of yourself. "Oh," you say, "but I shall fall." Yes, you will, and that falling shall be your salvation, for, "underneath are the everlasting arms." There you are, up at that window, and the flames are raging behind you so that you cannot escape—but one stands below. He is strong enough to catch you in his arms and he says, "Drop into my arms! Do not hesitate!" Jesus Christ never yet allowed any soul to be injured that dropped into His arms. Let go, man, let go! Let go everything and drop into the arms of Jesus! That is the saving thing—to let everything else go and trust only to Jesus, depending wholly upon Him who lived, and died, and rose again—and is the ever-living Savior of sinners. Drop into His arms! They are everlasting arms, as strong to save, now, as they were 1,800 years ago! Drop into His arms. God help you to do so, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 8.

Verse 1. *All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.* Every word, here, seems emphatic. Like the children of Israel, we are to observe all the commandments of the Lord our God—not merely some of them, picking and choosing as we please. It is a very ill conscience which regards some

of God's statutes and pays no attention to others! In fact, the very act of making a selection as to what commands we will observe is gross disobedience. "All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do."

Notice that we are not only to do as we are bidden, but to do it with carefulness—"you shall observe to do." God would not have a thoughtless, careless, blind service! We must bow our mind and heart as well as our will to His service. Remember, also, that it is not sufficient to "observe" the commandments so as to note what they are, but we are to "observe to do" them. That observation which does not end in right practice is like a promising blossom upon a tree which never knits and which, therefore, produces no fruit. Further notice that to walk in the ways of God is for our own benefit as well as for His Glory—"That you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers."

There are, doubtless, many good things which we miss because we are not careful in our walking. I am sure that the happiest life will be found to be that which is most carefully conducted upon the principles of holy obedience to God's commands. There are certain blessings which God will not give to us while we are disobedient to Him. Many a father feels that he cannot indulge his child as he would wish to indulge him when he finds the child negligent as to his father's will. So, if we please God, God will please us, but, if we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us. Let me read this most instructive verse again, that it may be further impressed upon your memories and your hearts—"All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers." To help you in obeying these commands, it is added—

2. *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 hearts whether you would keep His commandments, or no.* Look back and derive from your past experience a motive for more careful obedience in the future. He does not read his own life aright who does not see in it abundant causes for gratitude—and how can gratitude express itself better than by a cheerful, hearty obedience in the present and the future?

3. *And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna,* These two sentences come very closely together—"Suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna." I suppose we are not fit to eat heavenly bread till first of all we begin to hunger for it. God loves to give to men who will eat with an appetite—"He suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna."

3. *Which you knew not, neither did your fathers know.* It was a new kind of food and even in the day when they ate it, they did not fully know what it was. They saw that it came by a miracle and it remained a mystery and, I think we can say that though we have fed upon the Bread of Heaven, some of us, for well-near 40 years, yet we hardly know, nor dare to think that we know, what it is made of, nor can we tell all the sweetness that is in it. We know the love of Christ, but it still passes our

knowledge. It is true of us, as of Israel in the wilderness, "He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know."

3. *That He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.* It is a grand thing to be delivered from materialism, to be freed from the notion that the outward means are absolutely essential for the accomplishment of the Divine Purpose. If God had so willed it, we could have lived on air—if the air had been sanctified by the Word of God and prayer for such a use! The Lord has, however, chosen to feed us upon bread—yet our highest life, our real life, does not live on bread, but it lives on the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God! This is one of the passages with which our Lord fought Satan in the desert and overcame him. Happy is that servant of God who will arm himself with this same Truth and feel, "I am not to be provided for merely by money, or by anything else that is visible. God will somehow provide for me and I can leave all care about the means, if the means fail, and get away to the God of the means and lean, not on what I see, but on that arm which is invisible! That which you can see may fail you, for it is, like yourself, a shadow. But He whom you cannot see will never fail you. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack, but the eternal arm never fails and never is shortened! Lean on that arm and you shall never be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end! It takes 40 years to teach some people that lesson, but some, alas, have not learned it even at the end of 80 years!

4. *Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your feet swell these forty years.* See how God not only cares for His people's food, but for their raiment, also. We may, therefore, well take heed to Paul's injunction—"Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." Whether it was by a miracle that the Israelites' raiment did not wear out, or whether it came to pass, in the order of Providence, that they were able to get fresh clothing when it *did* wear out, does not matter at all—it made no difference to them how it was arranged, for it was equal kindness on the part of God who provided for them. "Neither did your feet swell." We call the Arab, sometimes, "The pilgrim of the weary feet," but the Israelites' feet were not weary. They traversed a stony wilderness, yet God kept them in such health and strength that their feet swelled not even after 40 years of journeying! You and I often get worn out in 40 hours—forty days are as long as we can hope to go. But God enabled His ancient people to go on for 40 *years* and still their feet swelled not. Dr. Watts sweetly sang—

"Mere mortal power shall fade and die,
And youthful vigor cease.
But we that wait upon the Lord
Shall feel our strength increase!
The saints shall mount on eagles' wings,
And taste the promised bliss,
Till their unwearied feet arrive
Where perfect pleasure is."

5. *You shall also consider in your heart that, as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.* We sometimes think that we

could do without the Lord's chastening. If He will give us food and raiment and keep our feet from swelling, we will not crave the rod. No, but though we do not *ask* for it, the rod is one of the choicest blessings of the Covenant—and if we are the Lord's children, we shall not go without it! To come under Divine discipline is one of the greatest mercies we can ever have. Many of us, who are now men and women, thank God for earthly parents who have corrected us. We wonder what we would have been if there had been no discipline in our father's house. So, truly, is it with all of us who are God's children—in years to come we shall prize the chastisement which now makes us grieve. Even now it is well if, by faith, we can apply to our own heart this text—"as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you."

6, 7. *Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him. For the LORD your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.* There are changes in our condition. Israel was not always in the wilderness—the chosen people were brought into a good land, into a place of rest from their weary wandering. So it may happen to you and to me that even in temporal circumstances, God may work a great change for us—and especially will He do this in *spiritual* matters. After a time of wilderness traveling, we who have believed enter into rest—we come to understand the Gospel—and he who understands the Gospel is not, any longer, in the wilderness! In a certain sense, he has come into the land of promise where he already enjoys Covenant mercies. It is true that the Canaanite is still in that land and we have to drive him out, but it is a good land to which God has brought us, "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." The Lord makes us drink of the river of His good pleasure. He satisfies us with the cooling streams of His Covenant love.

8. *A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil, and honey.* I will not go into a spiritualizing of all this, but I know that you who have come to believe in Christ and have entered, by faith, into His rest, know what sweet things God has provided for you—not merely bare necessities, but choice delights. He gives you to eat of the sweetnesses. He gives you the fatnesses—the wines on the lees, well-refined, and the fat things full of marrow. I trust that there are many here who know the blessed experience of joy and peace in believing. You have entered into a fair region. You have passed through the belt of storms. You have come where the trade winds blow heavenward, Your sails are filled, your vessel skips along before the breeze. You are making good progress towards the Fair Havens of eternal happiness!

9. *A land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig brass.* There are deep things hidden away in the Gospel treasuries. Silver and gold there may be none, but then, iron and copper are much more useful things—and the most useful things we shall ever need in this life lie hidden beneath the surface of the Gospel! If we know how to dig deep, we shall be abundantly rewarded by the treasures which we shall discover. Well now, if your experience has thus changed.

If you have left the fiery serpents and the howling wilderness behind you and have come into a place of peace and enjoyment, what follows?

10. *When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.* He permits you to eat—not to satiety, but you may eat and be full—only not so full but that you can always bless His name! Do not be afraid of holy joy! Eat and be full of it, only let it never take your heart away from Him who gives you the joy. On the contrary, bless your God for the good land which He has given you. It is said that in the olden times, pious Jews always blessed God before they ate, and always blessed God *after* they ate. They blessed God for the fragrance of the flower whenever they smelt it. Whenever they drank a cup of water, they blessed the Lord who gave them drink out of the rock in the desert. Oh, that we were always full of praises of God! Then it would not hurt us to be full of meat. But if we get full of meat and are empty of praises, this is mischievous, indeed!

11. *Beware that you forget not the LORD your God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you this day.* That would be practical atheism—not keeping the commandments of God is one of the most vivid ways of forgetting Him!

12-14. *Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart is lifted up and you forget the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.* The other day a friend asked me this question, "From where does God get His princes?" And the answer I gave was, "He often picks them off dunghills." Oh, but they sometimes forget the dunghills where they grew and think themselves wonderfully important individuals! Then there is a time of pulling down for them. We cannot eat and be full without having the temptation of getting our heart lifted up! It is a great blessing to have the heart lifted up in one way, that is, in God's way—but to be lifted up by bread, to be lifted up by silver, to be lifted up by flocks and herds is such a bad way of being lifted up that evil and sorrow must come of it! See, the Lord does not forbid His people to build a house, or to eat and to enjoy what He gives them. But He does charge them not to forget the God who gave them these mercies, nor to forget where they used to be in slavery—"Beware that you forget not the Lord your God which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

16. *Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint.* I cannot but pause as I remember my own passage through "that great and terrible wilderness, where there was no water." When a soul is under conviction of sin, "fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought" are very *feeble images* of the pains and miseries that come of guilt unforgiven! "Where there was no water." Oh, what would we not have given, then, to have understood a little of that Gospel which, perhaps, we now despise? Oh, what would we not have given, then, just to have moistened our burning lips with the Living Water of the precious Word in which, possibly, now we see no re-

freshing? May God have mercy upon us for our forgetfulness of His great mercy! Let us, with deep gratitude, think of Him again—"Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint." "More likely," says one, "to bring fire rather than water out of a rock of flint." And it did seem as if the Cross of the curse must have cursed us, yet it blessed us! The Lord brought forth Living Water out of that Rock which was smitten for guilty man!

16, 17. *Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that He might humble you, and that He might prove you, to do you good at your latter end; and you said in your heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.* We must not say this about either temporal or spiritual wealth! If we have grown in Grace and have become useful, and are spiritually a blessing to others, we must not take any credit for it—or else down we shall go before long! God did not enrich you that you might set up for a god in opposition to Him. Christ did not love you that you might make yourself a rival to Him. Oh, that must not be! We must never say in our heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth."

18, 19. *But you shall remember the LORD your God: for it is He that gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His Covenant which He swore unto your fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if you do at all forget the LORD your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.* If you live like sinners, you will die like sinners! "Where, then, is the perseverance of the saints?" asks one. Why, in this, that they *shall not live like sinners*! God's Grace will not let them go wandering after idols to worship and to serve them! He will keep us faithful to Himself, but if we will wander after idol gods, it *proves that we are not the Lord's* true Israel, and we must expect to be served as others have been who have turned aside to worship idols—

20. *As the nations which the LORD destroys before your face, so shall you perish; because you would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.*

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.

"HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK!"
NO. 2436

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 27, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 1887.

"The LORD is good to the soul that seeks Him."
Lamentations 3:25.

I DO not know whether it has ever struck you what a grand man Jeremiah was. If you were to read the book of his prophecy through, from beginning to end, and make yourself familiar with the circumstances under which the Prophet spoke and wrote, I think you would come to admire him as one of the greatest men who ever lived, for he was not, like Isaiah, brightened and cheered by having a joyful message to deliver, but he had received a sorrowful burden from his Lord—and he faithfully carried it out—and when the people rejected his testimony and refused his message, he went on delivering it all the same. There was no gleam of success to gladden his ministry, yet he never flinched! Nobody seemed to believe in him—he was the jest and the by-word of the people, but that did not matter to him at all. He was tender and affectionate, so that he cried, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

Yet he was as stern and unflinching as if his face had been made of adamant stone. I think him second to no man in the whole list of human beings who have ever lived. Therefore, when I found some of those with whom I have been in controversy of late describing one of my protests against false doctrine and worldliness as a, "Jeremiad," or a Jeremiah's Lamentation, I said to myself, "That is the highest compliment they could pay me." If they call me a fool, even, I will, nevertheless, accept the epithet with delight! I count it no dishonor to have to lament as Jeremiah did, and to have to bear a sorrowful testimony even as Jeremiah did—and in that great day when the Lord rewards His servants, the rewards will not be in proportion to the way in which their testimony was *received*, but in proportion to the fidelity with which they *delivered* it! If Jeremiah is rejected of men, yet, if he has delivered his Master's message, he is not rejected of his Master! And in that great day when God, the Judge of all, shall bring us to account, we who have spoken out of the depths of our soul and have had our testimony made jest and a by-word, shall receive none the less honor from our Lord if we have faithfully delivered it!

I begin with this thought, concerning the man who uttered my text, because the people who speak somewhat sorrowfully and sadly are said to be "pessimists." It is an ugly word, yet I have had it applied to myself. Whereas other men who speak very brightly—possibly more brightly than they ought to speak—those who have rose-colored glasses for everything, are called "optimists." Well now, when a man is in deep distress of mind and in sore trouble of heart, if a person comes to him, and says, "Oh, my dear Sir, there is really not much the matter with you! It is a very simple thing to cure, and I will soon get you through it," you say to yourself, "That gentleman is an optimist," and you make very large deductions from what he has to say because you feel that he is inclined to flatter, and to put a brighter face upon things than they ought to wear!

But if another person comes, who is called a pessimist, one who always makes the worst of everything—a man who writes "Jeremiads" and who utters lamentations—if he, nevertheless, says something very bright and cheering, you say to yourself, "Now I know that what he says is true. There must be something really cheering and hopeful when such a man as *that*, who dares to look at the dark side of things, can yet venture to encourage me." Well now, it is the Prophet Jeremiah, in his Book of Lamentations, who says to you who are seeking the Lord, "The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him." You do not need to take any discount off his words of cheer! Depend upon it, what he says is true! If he of the weeping eyes. If he of the sorrowful spirit, nevertheless, in all the bitterness of his misery, bears testimony that the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him, then, depend upon it, it is so! So we begin at an advantage. I pray you to believe the text because of the man who was inspired to utter it.

I shall try briefly and earnestly, first, *to describe a seeking soul.* Next, *to assure him that God is good to him.* And then *further to cheer him on in his seeking.*

I. First, I am to try to DESCRIBE A SEEKING SOUL.

Everybody does not seek the Lord. There are many who say to God, by their actions if not by their words, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Your ways." The man who seeks the Lord is the man who feels that he needs Him. *He is under a sense of need*—a need which he could hardly describe, but which, nevertheless, weighs very heavily upon him. He needs something very great, but he hardly knows what it is. He feels that he has a void—an emptiness within that needs filling. There is a something that he believes would content him if he could get it, but he has not got it yet. He feels that he is not right with God. He feels like one who is far off from God. He feels guilty and he needs pardon. He feels sinful and he needs renewing. He feels everything that he ought not to be and he wants to be changed, to be made a new man. That is the one who seeks the Lord—a man does not seek after that which he does not want—but a conscious and urgent need drives the troubled soul to seek after God.

This seeker, also, is one who, though he does not know it, *has a measure of faith*, for he believes, deep down in his heart, that if he could

once get to God, all would be well with him. He has heard of God in Christ Jesus and he says within himself, "Oh, if I could but find this blessed Mediator! If I could but discover this glorious Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, it would be well with me." He has not believed so as to appropriate Christ, but he believes so much as to wish that he *could* appropriate Him. This is the man who seeks the Lord. We do not seek for that which appears to have no value in it, but, in proportion as a man has, first, a sense of his need, and secondly some idea of the value of the great blessing which he needs, he becomes an earnest seeker! I hope I am talking to some persons of this kind as I am describing their true character.

Further, this seeker *sometimes seeks very unwisely*. He goes to seek God where he will never find Him, like the holy women did when they went to the sepulcher to find the risen Christ, and the angel asked them why they were seeking the living among the dead! When a soul wants God, and needs salvation, it will begin to seek the Lord by its own doing, by its own feelings, by its own strange eccentricities, perhaps. It wants God and it must have Him! You know how a starving man will break through stone walls to get at the food that he so terribly needs, and, often, a man who is seeking after God would go through stone walls, or over them, if he might but find Him—yet that is *not* the way to seek the Lord. "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ, again, from the dead)." Christ is not far off, He is very near you—and yet the seeker is unwisely seeking after God as though He were far away—and for Christ as though he had to do some strange and wonderful thing in order to find Him. Some of you think that you must have a remarkable dream. Others expect an angelic vision. Some are waiting to hear a very extraordinary sermon and to feel very amazing emotions. This is the nature of seekers, that they often seek in a very unwise way. But still, they do seek—and it is a mercy that they do—for, "the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him."

I will tell you what true seekers do when they act wisely. I notice that *they often get alone*. When you begin to seek the Lord, my young Friend, you will steal away by yourself. Father and mother will say, "We do not quite know what has come over him, he seems so different from what he used to be. He gets up into his little room—we think he must go there to pray." If his parents are gracious people, they begin to have great hope of him. I remember times when I was never so happy as when I could get alone. Seekers, true seekers, will find some quiet place. That is a difficult thing to find in this noisy London, yet a real seeker will make even a crowded street to be his place of retirement, or he will walk down some back alley and be thinking, and crying, and seeking and groaning! But in the country, how often have I known young lads to get down a sawpit, or up a hayloft, or in the corner of a barn, or anywhere where they could but sit in quiet meditation and try to *think* their way to Jesus' feet, that they might find Him if they could. That getting alone is a good sign.

When a stag is wounded, it delights to hide in the recesses of the forest that it may bleed and die alone. And when God has shot His arrow of conviction into a human heart, one of the first signs of the wounding is that the man likes to get alone.

I will tell you another thing about the true seeker. You will find *that he begins to bring out his Bible*, that much-neglected Book. Now that he is seeking the Lord, he knows that—

"Within this sacred Volume lies,
The mystery of mysteries."

And he begins to study his Bible as he never did before! It is a blessed sign when the young man or the young woman begins to take an interest in the Word of God and searches the Scriptures, saying, "Lord, bless this Book to me. The Christ is here. He feeds among the lilies of Your revealed Truth. Oh, that I might meet Him, and that I might call Him mine!"

And as, perhaps, in his study of the Scriptures he meets with difficulties, you will find that this seeking young man is anxious to *go and hear the Word preached,* for the Word rightly preached has a warmth about it and a vividness which are not always so manifest to the seeker in his reading of the Word. If you are true seekers, I know that you will want to go and hear a preacher who touches your conscience, who speaks to your heart and who longs to bring you to Christ. My dear Hearers, I do not mind where you go on the Sabbath if you really hear the Truth of God faithfully preached. As far as I am concerned, there are plenty of people here, but I do wish that, on the Sabbath, and on weeknights too, you would *not* have any desire to go and hear a "clever" preacher, or to some fine musical service, but that you would say, "We have to care, first, for our immortal souls, and we long to seek and find eternal life, therefore let us go where the minister preaches Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Let us go where we can hear the Gospel of the Grace of God, for that is what we need." You cannot afford to throw away a single hour, either in listening to human oratory or to any other kind of performance. With you, it must be, "Give me Christ, or else I die." Therefore, be diligent in hearing the Gospel preached.

That is, then, another mark of a true seeker—he loves to be alone, he searches the Scriptures, he goes as much as he can to hear the Gospel preached.

And there is another sign of the true seeker that I always love to see—*he likes to get into godly company*. He does not care, now, for the friends he once so much admired—his merry friends who laughed away the years—if he can but get where he can hear a few poor people talking about Jesus! Something like John Bunyan, you remember, who saw three or four godly women at Bedford talking about the things of God and the tinker drew near and listened to their gracious conversation, though their talk about the new birth was beyond his comprehension! That is good seeking when you turn eavesdropper to hear about Christ, when you like to listen to some poor neighbor who does not know much more than you know, yourself, but who, in her simple language, talks

about an experience of the things of God to which you have not as yet attained, but which you wish you had felt and known!

There is another mark of a seeker that is still better—"*Behold, he prays*." Possibly, he used to repeat a form of prayer, but he has given that up and now he talks to God straight out of his heart and asks for what he really needs. And he not only does that morning and evening, but he is praying during most of the day! If you watch him from the other side of the counter, you may hear a sigh every now and then. Or when he is at his work, driving the plane, or using the hammer—if you are close to him, you may see his lips moving and you may catch such words as these, "Savior, reveal Yourself to me. Blood of Christ, cleanse me. Spirit of God, renew me." That is one of the men who are seeking the Lord!

I think there will be one more mark that you will see upon a sincere seeker—he will quit all that is evil as much as possible and he will seek after that which is good—and especially *he will seek after faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. He has heard it said that he that believes in Him has everlasting life and he says to himself, "Oh, that I could believe in Him!" You will see him, now, *trying* to believe, very much like a little child tries to take his first steps in walking alone. His mother holds out an apple and baby makes a daring venture to try, with three or four steps to get across to where mother holds out the bribe! Oh, I love to see poor souls trying to trust Christ, trying to rest in Jesus! They often make sorry work of it, but still, the Lord accepts it, for with their *hearts* they are really trying to rest in Jesus! If, poor trembling Seeker, your faith should bring you no comfort because it is so weak—keep on trusting to Christ!

When the bronze serpent was lifted up, all who looked to it were healed. There were, doubtless, some clear bright eyes that saw the bronze serpent from its head to its tail and, as they looked, they lived. But there were probably others who were so bitten by the serpents that their eyes were swollen and dim—they could only see out of the corners and the death-damp seemed to blind even that little bit of sight which they had—but, oh, if they could only get just a *glimpse*, so as just to see the glittering brass, though they could not make out the shape of the serpent, yet they lived! They were bid to look and if they looked, and could not see, yet the promise was not to the seeing, but to the *looking*! And so, as they looked, they were healed! Thus look to Jesus and you shall live.

I trust that many seekers here have come as far as this. If so, I may now conduct them to the next stage of my sermon.

II. I want, in the second place, to ASSURE THE SEEKING SOUL THAT THE LORD IS GOOD TO HIM—"The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him."

"Ah," says one, "my heart is almost ready to break! I have been seeking so long, I feel so sad, I am so discouraged." But, "the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him." Let me show you this Truth of God very rapidly.

First, *it is good of Him to have set you seeking at all.* He might have left you in your sins as He has left so many millions of your fellow men. He might have left you to be content with this vain, wicked world. At this moment you might have been leaning across the counter of the gin palace instead of listening to the Word of the Lord. Yes, instead of going home to pray, you might have been getting to the harlot's haunt and, tomorrow, instead of coming to the Prayer Meeting, you might have been found where the multitude amuse themselves with vice. Thank God that you are a seeker, for there is something good in that fact! On a dark night you may be grateful for one star shining in the sky, or even for a single match—it is very little, you think, but thank God for that little! "The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him," in setting him seeking at all!

But God is also good to the seeker *in giving him some gleams of comfort.* Did you say that you had been seeking the Lord for months? Well, how is it that you have kept on seeking? I think it must be because you have, sometimes, had a few rays of light. I cannot give you any better evidence than my own. I was long in seeking Christ and for that I blame myself, not Christ. But there were times, before I found Him, when I almost met with Him. I did not see Him, but I seemed to see the trees move as He passed along! I did not see Him, but I heard His footsteps and, sometimes I went home and said to myself, "Oh, yes, I shall find Him! I shall not cry to Him in vain." I even thought, sometimes, that I had laid hold of Him and that I had trusted Him—and though I went back, again, into despondency, yet I was not without hope of ultimately finding Him.

You know what it is, sometimes, when you are very hungry and you cannot get a meal, if you can get just a bite or two of *something*, it keeps you up till the mealtime comes. Well, it was like that when I was hungering and thirsting for Christ. Many a crumb this poor dog picked up from under the Master's table and so I was encouraged to keep on seeking till I found my Savior. Is it not so with you, dear Friend? Yes, the Lord is good to them that seek Him by just keeping their courage up and preventing them from sinking utterly into despair! Is He not good in keeping back the temptation which might have destroyed you? The foul insinuations of Satan trouble you, but they might be worse than they are! You have been driven almost to despair, but not quite. You have grated against the rock, but you are not shipwrecked yet. "He stays His rough wind in the day of the east wind." Thank God for that! "The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him."

I think that He is also good *in not letting us rest short of Himself.* You would have liked to have had comfort long ago, would you not? Yes, but comfort is not the main thing that you require—you need *safety.* Often the surgeon, when he has a bad case, will not let the wound heal. "No, not yet," he says. "if that wound heals too soon, there will be more mischief coming from it." So he lets in his lancet again and cuts out a bit of proud flesh. And our Lord will not let us close up the wound that sin has made lest it is but a sorry healing that will end in a worse wound than

before! I pray God that no one who is really seeking Christ may ever be able to rest till he gets to Him. There is good resting at the foot of the Cross, but you want to rest before you get there! I thank God for not letting you rest until you get to Christ. And I hope you will say—

"I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

Make that your resolve and may the Spirit of God keep you up to it! If so, you, too, will also prove that "the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him."

But He is much better to them that seek Him than you have ever imagined, for *He has given such rich promises to seekers*. Oh, the blessed invitations of Christ! "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "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." "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." This blessed Book is full of such promises as these—just the kind of promises that seeking souls need! And they all prove that the Lord is, indeed, good to them that seek Him.

He is also good to seekers because *He has made the way of salvation so plain*. Brothers and Sisters, there are certain gentlemen, nowadays, who want us to have what they call an advanced theology, an eclectic religion which will suit those who are supposed to be "cultured!" O God, save me from ever hearing such a thing as that! I want to be the means of saving to the poor and needy, the ignorant and the fallen—and God wishes to save such people—and, therefore, He puts the Gospel very plainly, "Believe and live. Trust the great Sacrifice, rely on Jesus Crucified and you are saved, and saved forever." A man with an intellect not much above that of an idiot may understand this Gospel and enjoy it! While a man with the greatest mental powers cannot understand it any better—no, he cannot understand it at all unless the Spirit of God shall reveal it to him! I thank God that it is not a difficult way of salvation that He has laid before us, but that it is simple, or as men say, "as plain as a pikestaff." God bring us all to accept this gracious plan of salvation!

Then, once more, is it not very good of the Lord *in being found of seekers in due time*? There is no true seeker who shall die in his sins. If you are sincerely seeking, you shall find—this is promised in our Lord's own words that we read just now—"For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." If I could take you through the whole dread region of Hell. If we could pause at every cell where the finally impenitent are shut up without hope. And if it were possible to interrogate every lost spirit, there would not be found, there, a single one that sincerely sought the Lord through Jesus Christ! No one shall be able to stand up at the Last Great Day and say, "I came to Jesus, but He cast me out. I trusted Him, but He did not keep His promise." No, my dear Hearer, if ever you shall be lost, it will be because you never came to Christ, because you never trusted Him, because you

would not have Him as your Savior! But if you come to Christ—poor, ragged, defiled, loathsome, guilty up to the hilt—if you come to Christ, remember that He said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And that Word of God still stands true! If you seek the Lord with all your heart, you shall surely find Him, for He "is good to the soul that seeks Him."

I try to speak to you very plainly, as if I were talking to you by your own fireside. I do not feel at any great distance from you in standing here to speak to all of you round about me, yet I half wish that I could get a hold of your hands, you unconverted ones, and say to you, "Believe that my Lord is good to them that seek Him! Believe it and seek Him for yourselves!" He is a good Lord. We sang, a few minutes ago—

"Oh, hope of every contrite heart!
Oh, joy of all the meek!
To those who fall, how kind You are!
How good to those who seek!"

Those are not mere words—they are the very Truth of God! He is, indeed, good to those who seek Him.

III. But, lest I weary any seeker where I want to win him, I shall close by FURTHER CHEERING HIM ON IN HIS SEEKING.

Friend, be of good comfort, *Christ is seeking you*. It is written, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." If I were at this time seeking a person in London, I might have a long and difficult task—it would be like the proverbial "hunting for a needle in a haystack." But suppose I knew that the person I was seeking was also seeking me? I think then I should say that there was a *double* probability of our meeting! If I am seeking him, and he is seeking me, and especially if he who seeks me is a man of high intelligence and wide knowledge, we shall meet one of these mornings or evenings, depend upon it! So, if you are seeking Christ, that is hopeful. But if Christ is seeking you and He knows all about you—all the ins and outs of you poor life—He and you will come together soon, I am persuaded of it! You are drawing nearer to each other every hour and it will not be long before your arms are about His neck and His arms about yours! You will be rejoicing in Him and He will be rejoicing over you!

I want to give you another word of good cheer, my seeking Friend. *It may not be long before you find the Savior.* It may, indeed, be so little a while that, before the clock strikes again, you will have found Him! Why not? "Oh," you say, "I wish it might be so! Oh, that I might find the Lord in that short time!" Well, look at me! I had been seeking Christ some four or five years under a heavy burden of sin. I remember well that Sabbath morning in the month of January, 1850, for there was a very severe snowstorm. I was going to the Congregational Chapel at Colchester that morning, but it snowed so heavily that I turned into the little Primitive Methodist Chapel, merely because of the heaviness of that snowstorm.

I was cold at heart, almost despairing. I thought that I would never find the Savior, but between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that place, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back at home, again,

what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life! Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, "Something wonderful has happened to you!" And I was eager to tell them all about it. I was like Bunyan when he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed field all about his conversion! Yes, I had looked to Jesus *as I was*, and found in Him my Savior! Well now, this October Sabbath night, you, dear Heart, have been seeking the Lord for ever so long. You will not need to seek Him any more if you will but look to Him—that is all you have to do! Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him and, as you look to Him, the great transaction will be done—your burden will be gone, the joy of salvation will be given to you from Heaven by God's own right hand—and you shall have a new song in your mouth, your feet shall be set upon the Rock and your goings shall be established!

And mark you this—*when the blessing comes*, it will be worth waiting for! When the pardon of your sin comes, you will say, "I do not regret my cries and tears, my weary waiting and anxious seeking. He has come! He has come! HE has come, my Lord and my God!" Why, if I had to wait at the posts of His door from youth to old age, yet if I found Him at last, it would well repay all my waiting! The joy and peace through believing, *which come from Christ*, are a wonderful off-set against the tears and sorrows that we have endured while we have been seeking Him.

This is my closing thought—*you have no need to go about seeking Christ any longer*. You have no need to wait even five minutes before you find Him, for it is written, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Do you know what it is to believe on Him, to trust Him? Do so now! "It would be a great venture," says one. Then venture on Him! "Would He save me?" Try Him! You have heard, I dare say, of the African who came over to England. Before he came, the missionary told him that, sometimes, it was so cold in England that the water grew hard and men could walk on it. Now, the man had heard a great many things that were not true which he had believed, but this, he said, he would never believe! It was "one great big lie, for nobody ever could walk on water." When he woke up, one December morning, and the stream was frozen over, he still said that he would not believe it. Even when his friend went on the ice and stood there, and said, "Now you can see that what I told you was true. This is water, yet it is hard, and it bears me up." The African would not believe it, till his friend said to him, "Come along," and he gave him a pull and dragged him on the ice, and then he said, "Yes, it is true, for it bears me up."

I would like to give some of you a bit of a pull like that! I am resting on Christ, on Christ alone, and He bears *me* up! Come along and try Him for yourselves! May the Lord lead you to do so! There never yet was a heart that truly trusted in Christ that was deceived by Him! Remember that verse which we sang at the beginning of the service, and—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!

None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

Then shall you know for certain that "the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him." God bless and save you, everyone, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 7:7-29.

Verse 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you.* He that will not ask for it deserves to go without it. Have you ever asked for it? If not, whose fault is it that you have it not?

7. *Seek, and you shall find.* How can you hope to find if you do not seek? Have you never found it? Have you never sought it? And if you have never sought it, how do you excuse yourselves for your neglect?

7. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Is that all—knock? Is the gate of Heaven not opened to you? Have you ever knocked? Do you wonder, therefore, that the door is shut? Take care, for the time may come when you will knock and the door will *not* be opened to you, for, "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door," then knocking shall be in vain. But at present this verse is still God's gracious word of *command and promise*—let me read it to you again—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

8. *For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.* When you are dealing with men, this is not always true. You may ask and *not* receive. You may seek and *not* find—you may knock and *not* have the door opened to you. But when you deal with *God*, there are no failures or refusals! Every true asker receives; every true seeker finds; and every true knocker has the door opened to him! Will you not try it and prove for yourself that it is so?

9-11. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?* You not only give, but you know how to give so as not to disappoint the asker. It is most blessedly so with the great Father in Heaven! He will not give you that which will mock and disappoint you—He will give you bread, not a stone—fish, not a serpent! No, more, He will give you the Bread of Life, and the Water of Life, that you may live forever!

12. *Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.* This is rightly called, "the golden rule." Christ says of it that it is, "the Law and the Prophets." It is the essence of them, it is the sum and substance of the highest morality. What you would that others should do to you, do that to them. Do not let that golden rule remain merely as a record in this Book, but take it out with you into your daily life. If we did all act to others as we would that others should act to us, how different would the

lives of many men become! Ours would be a happy world if this Law of Christ were the law of England and the law of all nations! God send us the Spirit by whom, alone, we shall be able to obey so high a rule!

13. *Enter you in at the strait gate.* The narrow gate.

13, 14. *For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in thereat because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* Do not try to go with the majority—truth is usually with the minority. Do not count heads and say, "I am for that which has the most on its side," but prefer that which is least liked among men! Choose that which is most difficult, most trying to flesh and blood—that which gives you least license because—"strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it." You will not hit upon it, then, in a "happy-go-lucky" sort of style. Heaven's gate is not found open by accident—there was never anybody yet who was saved by accident! No, "few there are that find it," is still true. God grant that we may be among the few! And why should we not be?

15. *Because of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* There are always plenty of them around! There is nothing of the sheep about them but the skin—and there is no connection between that skin and those that wear it.

16-20. *You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you shall know them.* You may judge *men* as well as trees that way—and you may judge doctrines that way. That which gives a license to sin cannot be true. But that which makes for holiness is true, for, somehow, truth of doctrine and holiness of life run together. We cannot expect holiness to grow out of lies, but we may expect all manner of evil to come out of false teaching.

21. *Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of My Father, which is in Heaven.* Practice is the true test, not words. Not he that says, "Lord, Lord," but, "he that does the will of God." Not he that merely has good words on his tongue, but he that has the will of God laid up in his heart and worked out in his life—that is the man who "shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

22, 23. *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.* If our lives are evil, it does not matter to what denomination we belong! We may be clever preachers, or mighty teachers. We may fancy that we have had dreams and visions. We may set ourselves up to be some great ones, but

if we have not done the will of God, we shall, at the last, hear Christ say to us, "Depart from Me, you that work iniquity."

24, 25. *Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.* He was a good man and a practical man, yet he was also a *tried* man. His house was built on the rock, but that did not prevent the rain descending, the floods coming and the winds blowing! The highest type of godliness will not save you from troubles and trials! It will, in some measure, even necessitate them. But, blessed be God, here lies the gem of the parable or narrative—"It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." It could stand the strain and endure the test, for it had a good foundation.

26, 27. *And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.* He was a great hearer, but he was a bad *doer*—yet he thought that he was a good doer, for he built a house. Alas, the house was on the sand! There was no real obedience to Christ, no true trusting in Him and so, when the time of trouble came—and trouble will come even to the hypocrite and to the false professor—we read of his house, "It fell: and great was the fall of it," because it could never be built up again! It fell hopelessly! It fell forever! Therefore, "Great was the fall of it."

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* There was a force and power about what Jesus said. He spoke from the heart. He spoke with the accent of conviction, whereas the scribes and Pharisees only spoke magisterially and officially, with no heart in their utterance—and there was, therefore, no power about it. God give to all of us the Grace to know the power of the Words of Christ! 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.

PRAYER, THE PROOF OF GODLINESS
NO. 2437

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 27, 1887.

"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found."
Psalm 32:6.

ALL men are not godly. Alas, the *ungodly* are the great majority of the human race! And all men who are, to some extent, godly, are not equally godly. The man who fears God and desires to truly know Him has some little measure of godliness. The man who has begun to trust the Savior whom God has set forth as the great Propitiation for sin has a blessed measure of godliness. The man whose communion with God is constant, whose earnest prayers and penitential tears are often observed of the great Father, and who sighs after fuller and deeper acquaintance with the Lord—this man is godly in a still higher sense. And he who, by continual fellowship with God has become like He, upon whom the image of Christ has been photographed, for he has looked on Him so long and rejoiced in Him so intensely—he is the godly man! The man who finds his God everywhere, who sees Him in all the works of his hands. The man who traces everything to God—whether it is joyful or calamitous—this is the godly man. The man who looks to God for everything, takes every suit to the Throne of Grace and every petition to the Mercy Seat—the man who could not live without his God, to whom God is his exceeding joy, the help and the health of his countenance, the man who dwells in God—this is the godly man. This is the man who shall dwell forever with God, for he has a Godlike-ness given to him and, in the Lord's good time, he shall be called away to that blessed place where he shall see God and shall rejoice before Him forever and ever!

Judge yourself, dear Hearers, by these tests, whether you are godly or not. Let conscience make sure work about this matter. Possibly, while I am preaching, you may be helped to perform this very necessary work of self-examination. The text, itself, is a test by which we may tell whether we are among the godly—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found."

In these words we have, first, *the universal mark of godly men.* They pray unto God. Then we have, secondly, *a potent motive for praying*—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You." And then, thirdly, we have *the special occasion when prayer is most useful*, the occasion of which the godly avail themselves abundantly—they shall "pray unto You

in a time when You may be found." All these points are well worthy of our earnest consideration.

I. The first is, THE UNIVERSAL MARK OF GODLINESS—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You."

When a man is beginning to be godly, this is the first sign of the change that is being worked in him, "Behold, he prays." *Prayer is the mark of godliness in its infancy*. Until he has come to pleading and petitioning, we cannot be sure that the Divine life is in him at all. There may be *desires*, but if they never turn to *prayers*, we may fear that they are as the morning cloud and as the early dew—which soon pass away. There may be some signs of holy *thought* about the man, but if that thought never deepens into *prayer*, we may be afraid that the thought will be like the seed sown upon the hard highway which the birds of the air will soon devour. But when the man comes to real pleading terms with God—when he cannot rest without pouring out his heart at the Mercy Seat—you begin to hope that *now* he is, indeed, a godly man! Prayer is the breath of life in the newborn Believer! Prayer is the first cry by which it is known that the newborn child truly lives! If he does not pray, you may suspect that he has only a name to live—and that he lacks true spiritual life.

And as prayer is the mark of godliness in its infancy, it is equally *the mark of godliness in all stages of its growth*. The man who has most Grace will pray most. Take my word for it as certain that when you and I have most Grace, we may judge of it by the fact that there is more of prayer and praise in us than there was before. If you pray less than you once did, then judge yourself to be less devout, to be less in fellowship with God, to be, in fact, less godly! I know of no better thermometer to your spiritual temperature than this—the measure of the intensity of your prayer. I am not speaking about the *quantity* of it, for there are some who, for a pretense, make long prayers. I am speaking about the *reality* of it, the intensity of it. Prayer is best measured by *weight* rather than by length and breadth and, in proportion as you grow in Grace, you will grow in prayerfulness, depend upon it! When the child of God reaches the measure of the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, then he becomes like Elijah, a man mighty in prayer. One such man in a Church may save it from ruin! I go further and say that one such man in a *nation* may bring down upon it untold blessings! He is the godliest man who has most power with God in his secret pleadings—and he who has most power with God in his secret pleadings has it because he abounds in godliness! Everyone that is godly shall pray unto the Lord, whether he is but the babe in Grace who lisps his few broken sentences, or the strong man in Christ who lays hold upon the Covenant Angel with Jacob's mighty resolve, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." The prayers may vary as the degree of godliness differs, but every godly man has, from the beginning to the end of his spiritual life, this distinguishing mark, "Behold, he prays."

Further, dear Friends, *true prayer is an infallible mark of godliness*. If you do not pray, remember that old true saying, "A prayerless soul is a

Christless soul." You know how often it has been the case that the highest professions of holiness have been sometimes accompanied by the practice of the deadliest vices. For instance, wherever the doctrine of human perfection has been much held, it has almost always engendered some horrible licentiousness, some desperate filthiness of the flesh which is unknown to anything but that doctrine! In like manner, I have known persons to become, as they say, so conformed to the mind of God, so perfectly in accord with the Divine Will that they have not felt it necessary to pray. This is the devil in white—nothing else—and the devil in white is more of a devil than when he is dressed in black! If anything leads you to decline in prayerfulness, or to abstain altogether from prayer, it is an evil thing, disguise it as you may!

But wherever there is real prayer in the soul, take it as certain that the lingering of holy desire in the spirit proves that there is still life in the spirit. If the Lord enables you to pray, I beseech you, do not despair. If you have to pray with many a groan, and sigh, and tear, think none the less of your prayers for that reason! Or, if you think less of them, the day may come when you will think better of your broken prayers than of any others. I have known what it is to come away from the Throne of Grace feeling that I have not prayed at all! I have despised my prayer and wept over it, yet, some time after, in looking back, I have thought, "I wish I could pray as I did in the time when I thought that I did not pray at all." We are usually poor judges of our own prayers! But this judgment we may make—if the heart sighs, and cries, and longs, and pleads with God, such signs and tokens were never in an unregenerate heart! These flowers are exotics—the seed from which they grew must have come from Heaven! If you pray a truly spiritual prayer, this shall be, indeed, a sure mark that the Spirit of God is striving within you and that you are already a child of God!

Once more, beloved Friends, *prayer is natural to the godly man.* I do think that it is a good thing to have set times for prayer, but I am sure that it would be a dreadful thing to confine prayer to any time or season, for to the godly man prayer comes to be like breathing, like sighing, like crying. You have, perhaps, heard of the preacher who used to put in the margin of his manuscript sermon, "Cry here." That is a very poor sort of crying that can be done to order, so, you cannot make the intensity of prayer to order—it must be a *natural* emanation from the renewed heart! Jacob could not always go and spend a night in prayer. It is possible he never spent another whole night in prayer in all his life after that memorable one! But when he spent that one by the brook Jabbok, he could "do no other," as Luther said. Pumped-up prayer is little better then the bilge water that flows away from a ship! What you need is the prayer that rises from you freely, like the fountain that leaped from the smitten rock. Prayer should be the natural outflow of the soul—you should pray because you *must* pray, not because the set time for praying has arrived—but because your heart must cry unto your Lord.

"But," says one, "sometimes I do not feel that I can pray." Ah, then, indeed, you need most to pray! That is the time when you must insist upon it that there is something sadly wrong with you. If, when the time has come for you to draw near to God—you have the opportunity and the leisure for it, but you feel no inclination for the holy exercise—depend upon it that there is something radically wrong with you! There is a deadly disease in your system and you should, at once, call in the heavenly Physician. You have need to cry, "Lord, I cannot pray. There is some strange mischief and mystery about me. There is something that ails me! Come, O Lord, and set me right, for I cannot continue to abide in a prayerless condition!"

A prayerless condition should be a miserable and unhappy condition to a child of God—and he should have no rest until he finds that once more his spirit can truly pour itself out before the living God! When you are in a right state of heart, praying is as simple as breathing. I remember being in Mr. Rowland Hill's chapel at Wotton-Under-Edge, and stopping at the house where he used to live. I said to a friend who knew the good man, "Where did Mr. Hill use to pray?" He replied, "Well, my dear Sir, I do not know that I can tell you that. And if you were to ask, 'Where did he *not* pray?' or, 'When did he *not* pray?' I should be unable to tell you. The dear old gentleman used to walk up and down by that laurel hedge and if anybody was outside the hedge, he would hear him praying as he went along. Then he would go up the street and keep on praying all the time. After he had done that, he would come back, again, praying all the while. And if he went indoors and sat down in his study, he was not much of a man to read, but you would find that he was repeating some verse of a hymn, or he was praying for Sarah Jones who was ill, or he would plead for Tom Brown who had been backsliding."

When the old man was in London, he would go up and down the Blackfriars Road and stand and look in a shop window. And if anybody went to his side, it would be found that he was still praying, for he could not live without prayer! That is how godly men come to be, at last—it gets to be as natural to them to pray as to breathe! You do not notice all day long how many times you breathe. When you come home at night, you do not say, " I have breathed so many times today." No, of course you do not notice your breathing unless you happen to have asthma! And when a man gets asthma in *prayer*, he begins to notice his praying! But he who is in good sound spiritual health breathes freely, like a living soul before the living God—and his life becomes one continual season of prayer.

To such a man, *prayer is a very happy and consoling exercise*. It is no task, no effort. His prayer, when he is truly godly and living near to God, is an intense delight! When he can get away from business for a few quiet minutes of communion with God, when he can steal away from the noise of the world and get a little time alone—these are the joys of his life! These are the delights that help us to wait with patience through the long days of our exile till the King shall come and take us home to dwell with Him forever!

Those prayers of the godly, however, may *be presented in a great many forms*. Some praying takes the good form of *action*—and an act may be a prayer. To love our fellow men and to desire their good is a kind of consolidated practical prayer. There is some truth in that oft-quoted couplet by Coleridge—

"He prays best, who loves best
All things, both great and small."

There comes to be a prayer to God in giving alms, or in preaching the Gospel, or in trying to win a wanderer, or in taking a child upon your knee and talking to it about the Savior. Such acts are often most acceptable prayers, but when you cannot act thus, it is well to pour out your heart before the Lord in words. And when you cannot do *that*, it is sweet to sit quite still and look up to Him and, even as the lilies pour out their fragrance before Him who made them, so do you, even without speaking—worship God in that deep adoration which is too eloquent for language—that holy nearness which, because it is so near, dares not utter a sound lest it should break the spell of the Divine silence which envelopes it! Frost of the mouth, but flow of the soul, is often a good combination in prayer. It is blessed prayer to lie on your face before God in silence, or to sigh and cry, or moan and wail, as the Holy Spirit moves you. All this is prayer, whatever shape it assumes, and it is the sign and token of a true Believer's life.

I think that I have said enough upon that first point—the universal mark of godliness is prayer.

II. Secondly, there is, in the text, A POTENT MOTIVE FOR PRAYING—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found."

The motive seems to be, first, *because God heard such a great sinner as David was*. Possibly you know that this passage is very difficult to interpret. It appears to be simple enough, yet there are a great many interpretations of it. In the Revised Version you will find the marginal reading, "In the time of finding out sin." Let me read the context—"I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. For this let everyone that is godly pray unto You in the time of finding out sin." It runs all right and the context seems to warrant it. I am not sure that it is the correct translation, but the sense harmonizes with it, so let us learn from it this lesson, that God has heard the prayer of a great sinner!

There may be, in this House of Prayer, someone who has gone into gross and grievous sin—and this reading of the passage may be a message from the Lord to that person. David had sinned very foully and he had added deceit to his sin. His evil deeds have made the ungodly to rail at godliness even until the present day, so that infidels ask in contempt, "Is this the man after God's own heart?" It was an awful sin which he committed, but there came to him a time of finding out his sin. His heart was broken in penitence and then he went to God and found mercy and

he said, in effect, that it was so wonderful that such a wretch as he should be forgiven, that every godly man, as long as the world stood, would believe in the confession of sin to the Lord and in the power of prayer to obtain pardon for the guilty! I like that meaning of the text, for it is sometimes necessary to us, when we are under a sense of sin, to think of such sinners as Manasseh, Magdalene, the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus. There are times, even with those whom God has greatly blessed, when nothing but the *sinner's* Savior will do for them. And when they feel that if there were not salvation for the vilest of the vile, there would be no salvation for them!

So God gives us a case like that of David, that everyone that is godly may pray unto Him in the time of finding out his sin. We might have been afraid to come if David had not led the way! "Come," he says of the broken heart, he who wrote the 51st Psalm, "God forgave *me* and He did it that He might show forth in me all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter repent and believe."

Another motive for prayer which I think the text brings before us is this, *we all need daily pardon*—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You." "For this"—for this covering of sin, for this blotting out of iniquity. Dear Friends, I hope that all of you pray unto God daily for the forgiveness of sins. I am sure that all the godly among you do so. If you commit no sins, then the Savior made a great mistake when He left us the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses." What is the need of that petition if we have no trespasses to be forgiven? But for this, that is, for the pardon of his sin, everyone who is godly will pray unto the Lord.

And everyone who is godly will pray unto God for this reason, also, namely, *because he has received the pardon of sin*. You remember when you made your confession to the Judge of All and received absolution from Him? You remember when, with broken heart and downcast eye, you acknowledged your sin unto Him and He put away your transgression? Well then, that is the reason why you should always be praying! He who heard you, then, will still hear you! He who put away your sin, then, by that one great washing in the Fountain filled with blood, will continue to put away your sin by that foot-washing which He continually gives to us, of which Jesus said, "He that is washed needs not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Blessed be God, we shall not cease to pray for pardon although we have received pardon! We will crave the daily renewal of the Divine token of reconciliation. If we received it when we were sinners, much more shall we receive it, now that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son! If we received it when we were outcasts, much more shall we receive it, now that we are His dear children!

Again, "For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You," that is to say, *because troubles come*, for the context teaches us this lesson. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble." Brethren, the Lord takes care to keep us praying, does He not, by giving us constant needs? Suppose that I had a friend upon whom I was de-

pendent and whose society I greatly loved, and that he said to me, "I will give you, in a lump sum, as much money as will last you till this time next year, and then you can come and see me and receive another year's portion. Or, as you like to come to my house, would you prefer to have the amount quarterly?" I would reply, "I will choose the latter plan, for then I should come to you four times in the year and have four dinners with you."

"Well, then, would you like it monthly?" "Oh, yes! I would like to come monthly and spend a day with you every month." "Perhaps," he says, "you would like to come daily?" "Oh, yes! I would prefer that! I would like to have a daily portion at your table." "Perhaps you would like to stay with me always, as Dr. Watts did when he went to Sir Thomas Abney's, to stay for a week, and I think that 'week' lasted for 28 years, for he never went away till he died. Perhaps you would like to receive everything from my hand and have nothing but what I give you." "Oh, yes, my Friend, this continual indebtedness, this constant dependence would give me so many opportunities of better knowing you whom I love so much that I would like to have it so."

You have heard of "a hand-basket portion." There is a maid to be married and her father says to her, "There, my girl, I will give you so many hundred pounds. Do your best with it, for it is all I shall have for you." Another girl is married and her father says, "I shall send you down a basketful of things on such a day" and so, every week, a present goes to her. It is a hand-basket portion, and it is always coming! It never comes to an end and she gets a great deal more from the old man than the other does, who has her fortune all at once. At any rate, it comes, every time, "with father's love." If it is given only once and is done with, perhaps, an ill feeling, animosity springs up. But if it comes, "with father's love," 50 or a 100 times a year, see how affection is increased between father and daughter! Give me a hand-basket portion!

You who like may go and gather a week's manna—it will stink before the end of the week! I like to have mine fresh every day, just as it comes warm from the ovens of Heaven and ready for the heavenly appetite of the man who learns to live upon the daily gift of God! For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto God. He shall have trouble to drive him, he shall have Grace to draw him, he shall have weights to lift him and they shall be so adjusted that though they threaten to hold him down, they shall really raise him up!

Once more, I think that, broadly speaking, the word, "this," here means, "*Because God hears prayer*, for this reason shall everyone that is godly pray unto Him." Now, dear Friends, it always will be a dispute between the true Believer and the mere professor whether God hears prayer. Of course the outside world will always sneer at the idea of God hearing prayer! A man said to me, one day, "You say that God hears your prayers?" "Yes, I do say it." Said he, "I do not believe it." "No," I said, "I never thought you did. And if you *had* believed it, I might have thought that it had been a mistake! I did not expect a carnal mind to receive the

Truth of God." "Oh," said he, "there is nothing in it!" Then I asked him, "Did you ever pray, my Friend? Did you ever pray to God?" No, he never did. "Very well, then," I said, "do not say anything about what you do not know! If you know nothing about what it is, hold your tongue till you do—and let those of us who have tried it speak of what we know."

If I were put in a witness box tomorrow, any lawyer in London would like to have me for a witness. So, when I stand here and declare solemnly that hundreds and even *thousands of times* God has answered my prayers, I claim to be as much accepted as an honest witness as I should be in the High Court of Justice. And I can bring forward, not myself, only, but scores and hundreds of you! Brethren, tell me, does not God hear prayer? [Voices—"Yes! Yes! Yes!"] I know He does and you godly folk can all bear witness that it is so! Calmly and deliberately, you could tell of many instances in which you called upon the Lord and He answered you. I am loath to argue this point, for it is not a point to be argued. If a man said that I had not any eyes, he might say it and my eyes would twinkle as I heard him say it. And when anyone says, "God does not hear prayer," I am sorry for the poor soul that dares to make an assertion about a thing which he has never tested and tried!

God does hear prayer and because He hears it we will call upon Him as long as we live! "For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You"—because there is reality in it and there is a blessed result from it! Prayer moves the arm that moves the world, though nothing is put out of gear by our praying. The God who ordained the effects that are to follow prayer *ordained the prayer*, itself—it is a part of the grand machinery by which the world swings upon its hinges!

III. I have not time to say more on that part of my subject, though so much more might be said. The last point is one to which I want to call your earnest attention—that is, THE SPECIAL OCCASION WHEN PRAYER IS MOST USEFUL. "For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found," or, "in a time of finding," as the margin of our Bibles has it. Is there any set time when God is to be found?

Well, in general, it is *the time of this mortal life*. So long as you live, here, and pray to God, He has promised to answer. Though it is the 11th hour, do not hesitate to pray! Christ's word is, "He that seeks, finds." There is a special promise to those who seek the Lord early, but this does not exclude those who seek Him late. If you truly seek Him, He will be found of you.

I think, too, that the time of finding is under this Gospel dispensation. God has always heard prayer, but there seems to be a larger liberty allowed us in prayer, now. The Mercy Seat is unveiled and the veil is torn away that we may come with boldness. But besides that, there are special times of finding God, namely, *in visitations of His Spirit*. Revival times are grand times for prayer! How many there are who put in their suit with God because they feel moved thereto by a heavenly impulse! There

is "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," as there was with David, and they begin to bestir themselves.

In closing, I will dwell only upon this one point—*there are special times of finding for individuals* and one of these is the time of the finding out of sin. Come back to the translation which I gave you before. The time when you will find out sin is the time when you will find God. "Why," you say, "it is a horrible thing for me to find out my sin." It is, in itself, but it is the best time to find out God! When your eyes are blinded with tears of penitence, you can best see the Savior. Do not say, "I find myself to be so guilty and, therefore, I have no hope." No, rather, because you find yourself to be guilty, therefore have hope, for the Savior came to seek and to save such guilty ones as you are! The time, I say, when sin finds us out, and we are humbled and ashamed, is the time when we may find our God through Jesus Christ.

So, too, a time of decision is a time for finding God. Some remain shilly-shallying—they have not decided whether they will live for the world and perish, or seek Christ and live eternally. But when the Spirit of God comes upon you and you say to yourself, "I must find Jesus Christ, I must get forgiveness and lay hold of eternal life. Give me Christ, or else I die," you shall have Him! God has promised that if we seek Him with our whole heart, He will be found of us. When you are decided for God thoroughly and intensely, it will be with you a time of finding.

So will it be when you come to God in full submission. Some of you have not laid down your weapons of rebellion yet. You cannot be reconciled to God while your sword is in your hand—down with it, Man! Some of you have fine feathers on your helmets and you come before God as great captains—off with those feathers! He will accept you in rags, but not in ribbons! He will receive you if you come confessing your sin, but not boasting of your supposed merits. Down with you into the very dust! Yield to God! Oh, that His mercy might make us all pliant as the willow before His mighty power! Then shall we find peace through Christ.

I believe that it is a time of finding when you come to concentration. I have known men, sometimes, say with a holy determination, "I am resolved that I will find Christ. I will find salvation and everything else shall go till I do. I shall go upstairs to my room, shut the door and not come out, again, till I have found the Lord." When the whole soul is bent on seeking Christ, then will the Lord speedily appear, and it shall be a time of finding!

But especially is it a time of finding when the heart, at last, trusts wholly and implicitly to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. You shall find that *God has found you* when you have done with yourself and taken the blood and righteousness of Christ to be the sole hope of your soul! God lead you to this, dear Hearers, this very hour!

I know that there are some here who are seeking the Lord. There are some who have lately begun to come under great anxiety. I hope that you will not be long in that anxious state, but that you will come right out of it by trusting yourselves with Christ. It is a wonderful end to anxiety

when you have somebody to trust and when you trust that somebody. Now, trust Jesus! He will save you. Yes, He saves you the moment that you trust Him, and He will never let you go, but will bring you to His Glory above!

May God send His blessing on these words, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 33.

Verse 1. *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.* Notice the context between the words, "rejoice," and, "praise." Joy is the soul of praise. God is not extolled by our misery, but by our holy mirth! Be glad in the Lord, for so can you make Him glorious. "Rejoice" and "praise," "for praise is comely for the upright." Praise is the beauty of a Christian. What wings are to a bird, what fruit is to the tree, what the rose is to the thorn, that is praise to a child of God!

2. *Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto Him with the Psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.* In the old days of forms, ceremonies and outward worship, musical instruments were abundantly used. But in the early Christian Church there was no such thing as a musical instrument because the Believers were afraid of going back to Judaism. It is curious that as men get further away from Christ, they get fonder and fonder of such things as these! Still, under certain conditions, they are lawful, though, we think, not expedient. God was acceptably worshipped in the olden time with harp and with Psaltery—and He may be so now—yet we worship Him, so we judge for our own selves, better without them.

3. *Sing unto Him a new song.* For, you see, that all the music had singing with it. "Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto Him." "Sing unto Him a new song." "Unto the Lord, unto the Lord, Oh, sing a new and joyful song!" It was only as it guided and strengthened the *singing* that the instrumental music was tolerated even in those early days.

3. *Play skillfully with a loud noise.* God ought to be worshipped with our best—"Play skillfully." God ought to be earnestly worshipped—"with a loud noise." Hearty worship is what the Lord desires and what He deserves. Let us render it to Him.

4. *For the Word of the LORD is right.* Let us praise Him for His Word. Men are depreciating it—let *us* appreciate it. "The Word of the Lord is right"—from the first page to the last it is right, emphatically right—let us praise Him for it!

4. *And all His works are done in truth.* The book of Providence is full of the Truth of God! Oh, for Grace to read it with thankful hearts! Let us praise God and sing unto Him as every page passes under our eyes.

5. *He loves righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.* You would think, from the way in which most people talk, that the world was full of misery and full of the anger of the Lord, but it is not! Notwithstanding all the evil that is in it, it is still true that "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

6. *By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.* They did not grow out of something that was there before—they were made out of nothing—"by the Word of the Lord." All the hosts of innumerable stars were created "by the breath of His mouth."

7. *He gathers the waters of the sea together as an heap: He lays up the depth in storehouses.* We know not how much God has in store, out of sight, in the vast abysses, but we know that He drowned the world when He broke up the fountains of the great deep.

8. *Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.* He is so great a God that all the oceans are in His sight but as a heap! Let us worship, and adore, and bow down before Him.

9. *For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.* With God it is no sooner said than it is done! "He spoke, and it was done." All that He has to do is but to bid it be so and so it is. And, as it was for creation, so is it for confirmation—"He commanded, and it stood fast."

10. *The LORD brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing: He makes the devices of the people of no effect.* If the *folly* of man yields to God's wisdom, so, also, shall the *wisdom* of man. No matter though men take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, God will certainly carry out His purposes.

11. *The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.* What the Lord intends to do, He will do—there is no turning Him from His purpose—and His dispensations stand fast forever.

12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.* If you have chosen God, God has chosen you! It is a happy thing when it is so. When these two elections meet—your election of God and God's election of you—then you are happy, indeed!

13, 14. *The LORD looks from Heaven; He beholds all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth.* Just as in a glass hive you can see all the bees and all they do, so can God see us—and He can see all that we think and read—and He knows us through and through.

15, 16. *He fashions their hearts alike; He considers all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* Look at Napoleon who marched more than half a million men into Russia—but they nearly all melted away and, after a time—he, himself, became a captive on the lone rock of St. Helena! "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host."

16. *A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.* Look at Goliath, stronger than all his fellows, yet how soon he lay prone upon the earth when a single stone from the sling of David smote him in the forehead.

17-19. *An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eyes of the LORD are upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from*

death, and to keep them alive in famine. Whatever becomes of kings and princes in the day of need, the Lord will take care of those who fear Him and put their trust in Him! There have been vast numbers of cases of amazing Providences—so many that they have ceased to be amazing—in which God has provided for those who have trusted in Him.

20. *Our soul waits for the LORD: He is our help and our shield.* Dear Friends, notice those three, "ours"—three firm clasps, three strong hold-fasts—"Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield." Why did He not say, "Our *souls* wait," for there are many of us? Ah, but we are so alike in this one thing that it is as if we had only one soul in all these many bodies, so the Psalmist says, "our soul." You remember when the disciples went to Emmaus and Christ talked with them, they said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" There were two of them—why did they not say, "Did not our *hearts* burn?" Well, their hearts were so one that he who spoke, called them, "heart," rather than, "hearts." And it is so here—"Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield."

21, 22. *For our heart shall rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name. Let your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in You.* That is a good prayer with which to close our reading! Let us all present it at the Throne of heavenly Grace!

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 450 Spanish translations, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

"TWO IMMUTABLE THINGS"
NO. 2438

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 30, 1887.

"Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine."
Ezekiel 16:8.

DURING this last summer I took a little journey into the country, as I had an opportunity of preaching and visiting in the region where I lived as a little child and where I afterwards spent some of my school-boy days. Everything was very vividly interesting to me, much more so than it could have been to anybody who was a stranger to the district. Now I want some of you, especially you who love the Lord, to go back in thought to your early days when you were children in Grace. Yes, go back even further than that—to the time of your *spiritual* birth—those first hours when your love to your Lord was true and fervent, and everything round about you was fresh and bright and joyous.

Biographies are generally interesting if they are biographies, that is to say, if the events of the person's life are truly told. But I think that the most interesting biography to any man is his own life. Take that book down from the shelf and look into it. You say that you have not kept a diary? Well, perhaps not, but you have one in your memory. You may have read Pepys' Diary, or Evelyn's Diary—they are interesting—but I want to get you to read your own! Turn over the pages of the book of memory and think of those first times when you sought and found the Savior, when you repented, when you believed, when you yielded yourself up to Jesus—when He took you to be His and you took Him to be yours! I am sure that this exercise will awaken many happy thoughts and I feel equally certain that it will suggest many regrets. But the happiness will be good for you if it excites your gratitude—and the regrets will be good for you if they deepen your penitence.

I want you, then, to go back for a little time and think of what God did for you, then, and of what He has done for you since. You are called to this retrospect by such a chapter as the one before us, which is God's own statement of how He dealt with the chosen nation. It is also, in a parable, the Lord's declaration of how He has dealt with us. He remembers it and He would have us remember it and, in the words of our text, He reminds us of the Covenant He made with us—"Yes, I swore unto you,

and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine."

Beloved, the time of our conversion, the time when we joyously realized that we were saved, was a covenanting time! The Covenant, itself, as to God's part in it, was made with Christ on our behalf before the earth was! It is older than the hills, it is as ancient as God, Himself! But, as far as *we* are concerned, the Covenant comes into practical, experimental context with ourselves when we believe in the Lord Jesus, rely upon His atoning Sacrifice and depend upon His promises of Grace. I repeat that converting times are covenanting times. We made a Covenant with God then. We said—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine.
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.
High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear!"

The Covenant was also on God's part, for He has promised to save all those who trust Him. And that promise became ours when we trusted His dear Son. All the promises of the Covenant of Grace became promises made particularly to ourselves when we received the seal of the Covenant by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ!

It is a somewhat singular thing that in this chapter God does not say anything about Israel's part of the Covenant. He seems to pass that over as though it were never worth mentioning. The nation had so entirely forgotten it and had been so altogether untrue to it, that the whole stress of the chapter seems to lie on what *God* did, how *God* kept the Covenant. Though the sin of the people is brought to their remembrance, yet the Lord does not say to them, "You entered into Covenant with Me," but He says, "I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine." So, at this time, I shall not say much about the Covenant that you made with God—do not you forget it—and do not forget that you have often forgotten it. You covenanted with God that you would be His and you meant it when you made the promise. You know how far you have been true to it, but what I want to remember, myself, and for you to remember, too, is God's Covenant with us—what He promised to do for us and what He has done for us! Let this thought dwell in our minds, that it may renew our love to our Lord and make us continually to realize that we are truly His because *He has made a Covenant with us.*

Here, then, is our text—"Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine." My remarks upon it will be, first, that *it was a Covenant freely made.* Secondly, *it was a Covenant entirely of love.* Thirdly, *it was a most sure Covenant*

and, in closing, I will try to show you that *this Covenant involves very gracious consequences*.

I. In the first place, IT WAS A COVENANT FREELY MADE.

The context tells us that this child, with whom God entered into Covenant, was one who could not have had any claim upon Him. It was a Covenant which He made at His own suggestion, out of the greatness of His own love, for the nation of Israel, of which He speaks, *had nothing in its pedigree to suggest it*. The Lord says, "Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite." Yet Jehovah entered into Covenant with that people. And now, if you look back upon *your* pedigree—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"

There are some who do not believe in the depravity of human nature. I must believe in it if I am, myself, a fair specimen of human nature. And every man who has watched his own heart and has any idea of the sin which dwells within him will know that his origin is tainted, that from the very first there is a tendency to evil and only evil and, therefore, that there is nothing in him as to his birth that can command or deserve the favor of God. If God enters into Covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord's part! But if God enters into Covenant with *sinful man*, he is then so offensive a creature that it must be, on God's part, an act of pure, free, rich, Sovereign Grace! When the Lord entered into Covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of Grace—nothing else but Grace—and I think that all of you who know what that Covenant means and can claim an interest in it, will say, "In my case, at any rate, it was of Grace and of Grace, alone." It was a Covenant freely entered into by Divine Grace, for our pedigree did not suggest it.

There was also *nothing in our condition to commend it*. This poor child had never been washed or clothed. It was left in all its filthiness to die—there was nothing about it to commend it to the attention of the passer-by. And what were we by nature? Oh, dear Friends, let us think, with shame and confusion of face, of what we used to be before we knew the Lord—

"Backward with humble shame we look
On our original!
How is our nature dashed and broke
In our first father's fall!"

We were, not all of us, open, profligate sinners—some were, however. If I speak of drunks, swearers, fornicators and the like, I may add with the Apostle, "And such were some of you; but you are washed." And others of us, who were not suffered to run in those evil ways, yet with our hearts, with our thoughts, with our tempers and with our spirit we sinned grievously in the sight of God. When I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was, how strong was my unrenewed will and how obstinate and rebellious against the Sovereignty of the Di-

vine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father's house. And when I enter Heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints and with the chief of sinners.

Yes, dear Friends, it is only too true there was nothing in our condition to commend us to God, or to induce Him to enter into Covenant with us! It was just because He would do it, because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy—because when He is showing the greatness of His mercy He feels that He may as well show it where it is most needed! So He looks, not for merit, but for misery! Not for deserving, but for undeserving! According to the riches of His Grace, He abounds in mercy towards the very worst of us, pardoning our sin, passing by our transgression and blotting out our iniquity.

It was, then, a Covenant freely entered into because there was nothing in our condition to commend it.

It was also a Covenant freely made because there was *nothing in our beauty to warrant it*. Indeed, there was a total absence from us of everything that might be reckoned comely and beautiful. Are you now penitent? Yet, *then* your heart was harder than adamant stone! Are you now believing? *Then* you were an unbeliever! Are you now zealous for God? *Then* you were rather zealous *against* Him, or if not, you were quite indifferent to Divine things! Is there any virtue, is there any praise, is there anything of good repute in you? It was not there when God entered into a Covenant with you! If there was any beauty in the wife who is mentioned in this parable, it was after the marriage. But before she was cast out, she was not grown. Whatever there was there was undeveloped and, still worse, unclean! And in that day when Jesus took us to Himself and we took Him to be our Savior, there was nothing as yet apparent of that which His Grace has now worked in us—it was totally absent. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us praise and magnify that Free Grace that entered into Covenant with you and with me!

That is the first point. It was a Covenant most freely made.

II. But we cannot linger long on any one part of our glorious subject, so we notice, in the next place, that IT WAS A COVENANT ENTIRELY OF LOVE.

Taking our text in its context, we learn that this Covenant was a *marriage Covenant*. It is a very wonderful thing that God should enter into a marriage Covenant with His people, but He has done so. The Lord Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself our Nature and has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, so that, when Paul is speaking of marriage, he says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." And then he adds, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church," which means that Christ has joined Himself to His people and become one in Nature with His chosen henceforth and forever! The Lord Jesus Christ has taken His people to be henceforth as joined unto Him as the wife is joined to her husband! They become one and so does Christ

make His people one with Himself. This is a very easy thing to say, but it is an almost impossible thing to compass and understand! Can it really be so, my Soul, that you are wedded to the Son of God? Is it really so that He says, "Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you," and that Covenant is a Covenant of marriage by which He has joined with Him all His people unto His own heart, world without end? Catch that thought if you can, and enjoy all the comfort of it—but give God the glory for such wonderful condescension—

"On such love, my Soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free!
Say, while lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally!"

That it was a Covenant, which was meant to be entirely of love is proved by *the way in which it was carried out*. See how it is said, "Then I washed you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you, also, with broidered work, and shod you with badgers' skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I decked you, also, with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head." And so on. This is a Covenant all of love, for these are all love tokens, love-gifts to the beloved one!

Now, will you go back in thought and recollect when you used to receive those gifts from the Lord? You remember when your ears were hung with earrings. Oh, what *hearing* that was! You did not grumble at the preacher, then—you enjoyed listening to him whenever you could! You would be up early and work hard so as to get a half-holiday, that you might go and hear the Gospel. Your ears were hung with earrings then! And, oh, how you rejoiced in God as He gave you humility, patience, zeal, love and all the precious jewels out of the Divine case! You hardly thought you had them, but other people could see them, and they told you that they were there. And they would sometimes say, "How beautiful God has made you by His Grace!" Do you remember that? You cannot have forgotten, I hope, those happy times when love tokens came to you so fresh and frequent! Those evening meditations, how delightful! That sitting up in bed at midnight, enjoying the Presence of your Lord—those morning prayers, those quiet walks! Oh, how precious were many texts of Scripture! How delighted you often were with the visits of the Spirit of God when He brought home this and that great Truth to your soul with overwhelming comfort!

I am only reminding you what the Lord has done for you. As for myself, He has been all love, goodness, kindness and nothing else to me. Truly, a blessed Husband have You been unto my soul, O Jehovah! I cannot find fault with You! Neither am I able to find words with which to sufficiently praise You for all the love and kindness You have made to

pass before me. Do you not say the same? I think you do. As we sang, just now—

"Do You ask me who I am?
Ah, my Lord, You know my name.
Yet the question gives a plea
To support my suit with Thee.
You did once a wretch behold,
In rebellion blindly bold
Scorn Your Grace, Your power defy—
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.
Once a sinner near despair
Sought Your Mercy Seat by prayer.
Mercy heard and set him free
Lord, that mercy came to me.
Many days have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen.
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who could hold me up but Thou?"

Let us praise the name of the Lord for the Covenant which, in the way it has been carried out, has proved to be a Covenant all of the Love of God!

And, dear Friends, I would not have you forget that it *must* be a Covenant all of Love which God has made with such creatures as we are, because *it could bring the Lord no profit*. What benefit could He get from us? He may well say, "If I were hungry, I would not tell *you*: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof." What glory can we bring to Omnipotence? What tribute can we render to Him who is Possessor of Heaven and earth?—

"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,"

of what use would they be to Him? No, if the Lord enters into Covenant with us, it cannot be for any gain to Himself! It must be only out of a *desire to benefit us*. Therefore, let us bow in reverent adoration of the unselfish, self-created love of God to us which we have known since that dear hour which brought us to His feet and He entered into Covenant with us and we became His own! Surely I have said enough upon this topic to suggest many a grateful thought within the minds of all God's people.

III. But now I want to carry you with me to another point. That is, thirdly, IT WAS A MOST SURE COVENANT—"I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you."

The Covenant which God makes with Believers is *intended to remain forever*. It is not something which may be broken in a few hours, like a child's toys—it is an everlasting Covenant. Read that 60th verse—"Nevertheless I will remember My Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant." How I love to get among the everlasting things! You know, in Canada, they build palaces of ice in the winter time and very beautiful things they are. But then, when spring comes, where are those palaces? And in summer, the very foundation upon which they were built has melted back into the St.

Lawrence. God does not make with His believing people Covenants like those ice palaces—His Covenant stands secure, though earth's old columns bow. If God has promised to save you—as He has done if you believe in Jesus—He will save you in the teeth of death and Hell! Rest you sure of this, and say with David, "He has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Here is something to rest upon—"I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you." He intended it to remain!

And in proof that He intended it to remain, *He ratified it by an oath*. Even among men, where there is an oath, there should be an end of all question. And if Jehovah lifts His hand to Heaven and swears, who shall, after that, dare to suggest that a question is possible? In the day in which we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, He did, as it were, swear unto us—"Surely, blessing, I will bless you." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." We needed nothing more than the promises of Jehovah to rest upon, but, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the Immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two Immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." My Soul, be you full of comfort, for the God who entered into Covenant with you has ratified that Covenant by an oath—

"His oath, His Covenant and His blood
Support me in the sinking flood!
When all around my soul gives way
He, then, is all my hope and stay!
On Christ the solid Rock I stand—
All other ground is sinking sand."

To make a Covenant even surer than by an oath, men were accustomed *to seal it by a sacrifice*. They struck hands and then they said, "Let us kill a bullock, let us slay a lamb—and the blood shall be the token that this covenant is made between us." Now, Beloved, you who believe have the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, to confirm the Covenant of Grace. God cannot break it! If you believe in Jesus, He must save you, by the pledges of His own Son's life and death! If you truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you believe that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. If you are trusting in Him, alone, He cannot, He will not cast you away, for the Sacrifice of His Son makes the Eternal Covenant sure. Is not the blood of Jesus called, "the blood of the Everlasting Covenant"? And herein we see the Covenant most surely established.

I would have you notice, in our text, that the Covenant is *remembered by God*. It is He who says, "I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you." He does not forget it. He does not want to forget it. He does not intend to forget it. He says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved

you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." The Lord remembers what He did when He swore that He would save His people and when He gave Christ to make the Covenant sure!

Yet once more, this Covenant *will be remembered by Him forever*. I will read again that 60th verse—"Nevertheless I will remember My Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant." And then the 62nd verse—"And I will establish my Covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord." He made a Covenant with Noah that He would not again destroy the earth with a flood. And He promised to hang His rainbow in the cloud as a token of that Covenant—and He has done so to this day. He has not destroyed the earth with a flood and His Covenant, which He has made with the greater Noah, who is our true Rest, stands fast, and shall still stand fast when Heaven and earth have passed away!

I want you to think with deepest gratitude of this wondrous condescension, that God should ever have entered into such a Covenant with you and with me. Why, if I believed what some preach about the temporary, trumpery salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it! But when I know that those whom God saves, He saves with an *everlasting* salvation. When I know that He gives to them an *everlasting* righteousness. When I know that He settles them on an *everlasting* foundation of *everlasting* love and that He will bring them to His *everlasting* Kingdom, oh, then I do wonder and I am astonished! Such a blessing as this to be given to you and given to me!—

"Pause, my Soul! Adore, and wonder!
Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'"

Sit still and meditate till your hearts burn within you because of this amazing love!

IV. I finish by noticing that THIS COVENANT INVOLVES VERY GRACIOUS CONSEQUENCES. Let me read the text again—"Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine." Read those last three words again—"*You became Mine*."

Beloved, if God has entered into Covenant with us, *we have become the Lord's*. Whose were you before? The world's? Your own? The devil's? Well, we will not dispute with the many claimants, but now you can truly say, "O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name."

"You became Mine." Do you recollect the spot—perhaps it was your own little room—where, as a youth you sat, after having long prayed and wept? And at last you felt that Jesus was yours and you sat still, and you said to yourself, "Yes, I am His, every bit of me. He has bought me with His blood, I am His." Do you remember those first few days in which you felt half afraid to do anything lest you should grieve that dear Lover of your soul? Then you wanted to do everything that you might please Him whose servant you had become. I remember a verse of Scripture, which, as a young Believer, I often used to repeat, for it was very dear to me. I

daresay you love it too. It is this—"Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." We felt, then, that we were wholly Christ's! Do we feel it as much now? "You became Mine." To come back to the marriage Covenant of which the Lord speaks—when the husband put the ring upon his bride's finger, he said to her, "you have become mine." Do you remember when you felt upon your finger the ring of infinite, everlasting, Covenant love that Christ put there? "You became Mine." Oh, it was a joyful day, a blessed day! Happy day, happy day, when His choice was known to me, and fixed my choice on Him!

Now, Beloved, *we ought to be the Lord's more and more*. Ever since we became His, we have been the objects of His love and mercy. He has done everything for us. I cannot tell you what He has done, nor can I tell you what He has not done, for *everything* that could be desired and wished for, Christ has done for you and for me! This long list which He gives, here, of how His spouse was clothed, and shod, and adorned, and crowned, reminds me of that verse in the 103rd Psalm where the list of benefits reaches its climax—"Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies." Well now, after having experienced the blessings of this Covenant, we ought to love our Lord Jesus Christ more than ever, and we ought to feel that we are more and more completely His than we ever were in our lives!

If that is our feeling, it will lead us to practically *renew the bond of the Covenant*. "You became Mine." After all that the Lord has done for us, let us become His, again! Let us come and yield ourselves up to Him once more. If any of you have backslidden, or grown cold towards your Lord, come and renew your vows unto the Most High. Say, with me, "My Savior, I repent not of having yielded myself to You; but I repent that I have not more fully carried out my resolve to be wholly Yours. If I had never trusted and loved You before, I would desire to begin to trust You and love You now, for You are unutterably lovely, You are unspeakably worthy of the confidence of every redeemed man and woman!" Let us each come and lay our hands, once more, on that dear head which was bowed with the burden of our sins—and look up into that dear face which has brightened our life so often with its love-glances. And let us now surrender ourselves fully, perfectly, joyfully, over, again, unto Him whose we are and whom we serve. God help you to do it!

And you who have never done so, may you come to Jesus this very moment! Your only hope lies in Him. God says by the mouth of His servant Isaiah, "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." There is no Covenant between God and man except in Jesus Christ! Come, then, and take Christ as your Savior, and God has sworn to you, and entered into a Covenant with you, that He will never cast you away, but you shall be His in that day when He makes up His jewels. God grant it, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

EZEKIEL 16:1-3, 6-16; 60-63.

In this very remarkable chapter, God describes His ancient people, Israel, under the figure of an infant which had been cast away, but which He had cared for and tended and upon which He had lavished much love, making it the object of His choice, on which His very heart was set. Yet this specially favored one had gone astray and committed all manner of wickedness. But for all that, the love of God had not been withdrawn. The whole chapter is a graphic picture of the way in which Israel and Judah went after false gods and forsook the only living and true God.

Verses 1, 2. *Again the Word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.* This is a very necessary command, for unless men *know* their disease, they will not apply to the great Physician. Only he who knows that he is poor will be willing to accept alms. It is, therefore, a necessary part of the duty of God's servants to make sinners know their evil ways—"Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations."

3, 4. *And say, Thus says the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem. Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite.* Abraham, the father of the nation, came from beyond the flood. But here, because of the sin of the people, God attributes their birth to the place of their settlement rather than to that chosen and noble man. They had lived so long in Canaan that they had grown to be Canaanites. Their habits were so evil that there was little difference between the Israelites and the Amorites and Hittites whom God had smitten in His wrath. So the Lord says, "Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite." Then, in the fifth verse, He describes the condition of the nation when it was in Egypt, when nobody cared for it.

5. *No eye pitied you, to do any of these unto you, to have compassion upon you; but you were cast out in the open field, to the loathing of your person, in the day that you were born.* You remember that Pharaoh tried to destroy all the male children of the captive Israelites. No mortal eye had any pity upon the downtrodden race in the house of bondage! But God looked down from Heaven in love, pity and Grace.

6, 7. *And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live. I have caused you to multiply as the bud of the field.* Israel came out of Egypt exceedingly multiplied, a great people! And when they settled down in Canaan, they still increased till they became a numerous and powerful nation. Remember that all this description applies to us *spiritually*. There was a day when we seemed polluted, cast away and left to perish—but God, in great mercy passed by and said unto us, "Live."

8, 9. *Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over you, and covered*

your nakedness: yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became Mine. Then washed I you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. How wondrously the Lord did all this for us! Our washing and our anointing, we can never forget.

10. *I clothed you, also, with broidered work, and shod you with badgers' skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk.* All that God could do for Israel, He did. That poor poverty-stricken nation increased and multiplied till, in the days of David and Solomon, it was of high repute among the nations and exceedingly rich and wealthy! Even so has God dealt with us—He "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We who, a little while ago, were cast out as helpless and worthless, He has greatly enriched with heavenly treasure!

11-13. *I decked you, also, with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel upon your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work.* The work of the Lord Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit have made marvelously glorious "broidered work" for our spiritual adornment! Well does good Dr. Watts sing—

"How far the heavenly robe exceeds
What earthly princes wear!
These ornaments, how bright they shine!
How white the garments are!
Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed
By the great Sacred Three!
In sweetest harmony of praise
Let all your powers agree."

13, 14. *You did eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and you were exceedingly beautiful, and you did prosper into a kingdom. And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon you, says the Lord GOD.* Doubtless, these words apply to Israel, but they are still more appropriate to us when we are covered with the *righteousness* of Christ and made beautiful in *His beauty*!

15, 16. *But you did trust in your own beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and poured out your fornications on everyone that passed by; his it was. And of your garments you did take, and decked your high places with divers colors, and played the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.* As soon as the Israelites grew rich and powerful, they began to build altars to the false gods! The very treasures that God had given them, they desecrated to the making of idols! God calls this a spiritual harlotry, turning aside from the one true God, who was the Husband of the nation, to follow after false gods. It is an evil sign in any of us when God's blessings are, themselves, made into idols. If you begin to worship your wealth, your health, your chil-

dren, your learning, or anything that God has given you, this is exceedingly provoking to the Most High! It is a breach of the marriage Covenant between your soul and God!

The rest of the chapter is rather for private reading than for the public assembly. It gives a truly awful picture of the sin of Israel and heaps up most dreadful descriptions of the way in which the people turned aside from God. I confess that after reading to the end of this chapter, I am astonished to think that it should close as it does. It is an amazing instance of the immutable love of God, Turn to the 60th verse.

60. *Nevertheless*—Blessed "nevertheless"!

60, 61. *Nevertheless I will remember my Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant. Then you shall remember your ways and be ashamed.* Infinite mercy makes men ashamed of their sinfulness. Great pardon produces both humility and holiness. The ungodly think that for God to forgive great sin will be to give a license to it, but the Lord knows that it is not so. He understands that the greatness of His forgiving love will be the cause of the pardoned sinner's hatred of sin—"Then you shall remember your ways and be ashamed."

61-63. *When you shall receive your sisters, your elder and your younger: and I will give them unto you for daughters, but not by your covenant. And I will establish My Covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the LORD: that you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.* Pardon from God for great sin is a silencer to all our pride. We never dare open our mouths, again, because of our shame. Yet the blessed silence of a grateful heart makes true music before the Throne of God—and when the Lord opens our lips—then our mouth shall show forth His praise.

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.

FIVE LINKS IN A GOLDEN CHAIN
NO. 2439

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1895,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 6, 1887.

"To Titus, my own [or, "true"] son after the common faith:
Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior."
Titus 1:4.

AMONG the friends of Paul, Titus was one of the most useful and one of the best beloved. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles and Titus was a Gentile. I should suppose that both his parents were Gentiles and, in this respect, he differed from Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess. Timothy would well serve as a preacher to the circumcision, but Titus would be a man after Paul's heart as a preacher to the Gentiles. He seems to have been a man of great common sense, so that, when Paul had anything difficult to be done, he sent Titus. When the collection was to be made at Corinth on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem, Paul sent Titus to stir the members up and, with him, another brother to take charge of the contributions. Titus appears to have been a man of business capacity and strict honesty, as well as a man who could order the Church aright and preach the Gospel with power.

Paul was, on one occasion, comforted by the coming of Titus. At another time, he was sad because Titus was not where he had hoped to meet with him. Though we know little about him from the Acts of the Apostles, or anywhere else, he appears to have been in every way one of the ablest of the companions of Paul—and the Apostle takes care to mention him over and over again in his Epistles to the Galatians and to the Corinthians—rendering honor to whom honor is due. It is a great pity when eminent men forget those who help them and it is a sad sign when any of us do not gratefully feel how much we owe to our coworkers. What can any servant of God do unless he has kind friends to bear him up by their prayers and their help? Paul did not forget to mention his friend and helper, Titus.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, in this particular verse, which I have chosen for my text, it seems to me that Paul has brought together five points in which he was one with Titus. It is a great blessing when Christian men are in union with each other and when they are willing to talk about the bonds that unite them. The more we can promote true unity among Christian men, the better. "First pure, then peaceable," must be our motto. First, the Truth of God—afterwards, unity in the Truth. We must not be content with merely contending for the faith—we must next fight the battles of life—and do all we can to note the points in which true Christians are agreed. I desire, at this time, to "stir up your pure minds

by way of remembrance," to refresh your memories in regard to all the love that we have borne to one another in the days and years that are now past—and to exhort you to a still closer union in heart unto the Glory of God.

There are five things in which Paul seems to me to bring out clearly his union with Titus. I might call them, "five links in a golden chain." I shall only briefly speak of each of the five and try to apply them to ourselves.

I. First, Paul says of himself and Titus, that THERE WAS A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM—"Titus, my own son."

This was a very close relationship—not that Titus was Paul's son after the flesh, for there was no natural relationship between them at all. Probably, in the early part of their lives, they had been total strangers to one another. But now, *Paul views Titus as his son.* We know, Beloved, many of us, that the Grace of God creates relationships of a very near and tender kind, relationships which will endure through life, relationships which will outlast death and be, perhaps, even more strong and vivid in eternity than they are here! Up yonder, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, I should think that the relationships which come of the flesh will, to a large degree, be merged in their celestial condition, but there, the sonship of Titus towards Paul is even stronger than it was when they were here below.

How comes that sonship? It comes, often, through God blessing a ministry to the conversion of a soul. Henceforth, he who has spoken the Word with power to the heart bears to him who has heard it the relationship of a father to a son. There are many in this place to whom I stand in this most hallowed relationship. You recognize it, I know, and I desire to express my intense and fervent love to the many of you who have been born unto God by the preaching of the Word here. I do not know of anything that has more greatly comforted me during the last week or two, in the time of sharp contention for the faith, than the reception of so many letters from persons of whom I have never heard before, saying, "You do not know me, but you are my spiritual father, and now, at such a time of trial as this is to you, I must write and send you a word of good cheer." It is always a marvel to me that my feeble testimony should ever be blessed to the conversion of a seeking soul, but when I think of the hundreds and the thousands—yes, I am not exaggerating when I say *thousands*—whom I have met with here on earth, and the many more, at present unknown to me, whom I hope to meet with either here or in Heaven, I do rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice! And I cannot help expressing my great love to all those who have been brought to the Savior by the words which I have preached and published.

The Apostle Paul not only said of Titus that he was his son, but *he called him his "true" son.* The Revised Version correctly translates it, "My true child." We have, alas, some who have called us, "father," in a spiritual sense, of whom we have cause to be ashamed. There are converts and converts. There are those who *say* they have received the Word and, perhaps, they have after the poor fashion in which the brain can receive it, but they have never received it in the *heart*—so, after running well, for

a while, they grow weary and turn aside. And then the gainsayer says, "That is one of your converts!" They throw this in our teeth and we do not wonder that they should do so. These base-born ones, these who have no part nor lot in the matter, though they pretend to have it—these are a perpetual grief to us—a wound in our spirit which is hard to bear. But, oh, what a mercy it is when we know that many of our converts are our "true" spiritual children, in whom the work of repentance was deep, and whose profession of faith was sincere—who are not the products of free will, but the products of the Holy Spirit—and who bring forth fruit, not of themselves, but their fruit is found in Christ Jesus to whom they are eternally joined! Oh, those of you, between whom and myself there is this intimate relationship, let us feel some touch of this sacred kinship and rejoice before God that we feel it!

But, Beloved, many of you are joined together by spiritual ties in other relationships. You, also, have been the means of bringing souls to Christ and there are those sitting by your side who, for that reason, look upon you with great love. Others of you are Brothers and Sisters in Christ—there is a brotherhood produced by the Christian life that will remain when other brotherhoods have all disappeared. An ungodly man may be the literal brother of a saint, but they will be separated in that day when there shall be weeping at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And they shall be eternally separated, for, though they seemed to be of one family, they were really of two families—the one an heir of wrath, the other receiving Grace to become a child of God.

But Beloved, as many of you as believe in Jesus Christ are members of one family. You are related to one another in the highest possible way through the kinship of the *spiritual* life. Therefore let us now salute each other in the Lord. Standing or sitting in our places and without using any outward sign or symbol, let our hearts go out to one another in loving greeting. As one family we dwell in Christ, knit to one another by ties of sympathy, love and mutual delight, because knit to Christ Jesus the Lord! I want you to feel that blessed union. Let us make this service a sort of family gathering, as when the father stands up at the head of the table at Christmas time, or on New Year's Day, and says that he is glad to see all the family at home once more. I seem to stand among you, thus, not as the oldest in years, but still the chief official member of this Church—and I salute you all, and bid you rejoice together because of ties of love which time cannot loose and death, itself, cannot dissolve!

II. Then the Apostle, wishing to show how real was the union between himself and Titus, next mentioned that THEY WERE BRETHREN BY A COMMON FAITH—"Titus, my true son after the common faith."

Yes, Beloved, and *our* faith is also common. It is the same faith in two respects. First, because *we believe the same truths* and, secondly, because we believe them with "like precious faith." We who are rightly members of this Tabernacle Church have believed the same Truths of God—there is no dispute or discussion among us about the fundamentals of our faith. To us, there is one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To us, there is one Mediator—Jesus Christ the Savior. We believe in the election of Grace by the Divine Father. We believe in the vicarious Sacri-

fice of the Eternal Son. We believe in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and in the need of it in the case of every living man, woman and child.

We believe in "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism." I feel intensely grateful for this unity of faith. A Church divided in its doctrine—what can it do? If it has to spend its strength in continual debate! What force has it with which to conquer the world? But knowing, as we know, that the Scriptures are our unerring guide, that the Holy Spirit is the Infallible Explainer of the Scriptures, we come to one common fountain to learn what we are to receive, and we receive it with one common anointing, even the anointing of the Spirit of God!

This unity of the faith is one of the things in which we ought continually to rejoice. I hope that I love all Christians, yet I cannot help saying that when I sit down and talk with a Brother who believes the Doctrines of Grace, I feel myself a great deal more at home than I do when I am with one who does not believe them. Where there is the unity of the faith, there seems to be a music which creates harmony—and that harmony is delightful to the renewed spirit. God grant, dear Friends, that none of us may err from the faith, but that we may be steadfast, immovable, firmly fixed in our belief of the great Doctrines of the Gospel, for this is the way in which we are made truly one!

Then Paul says that he and Titus were one, "after the common faith," that is, *the one faith was believed by them in the same way*. There is only one faith worth having. Paul calls it, in the first verse, "the faith of God's elect." It is real faith, cordial faith, childlike faith, God-given faith! It is not a faith that springs out of human nature unaided by the Holy Spirit, but it is precious faith—faith which is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit! Now, if we believe only intellectually, we do not enter into sympathy with one another as we do when we both believe *spiritually*, with heart and soul, from the very depths of our being.

Beloved, I trust that I can say of myself and of you, also, that we have received faith as a gift from God. Here, then, is another sacred tie binding us together. You have that jewel of faith gleaming on your bosom and here are others who have the same precious gem—and by that very fact you are drawn to each other. Your faith and my faith, if they are both true faith, are, "the common faith." I may have very little faith and you may have the full assurance of understanding, but your faith and mine are of the same sort. Your faith may be but as a grain of mustard seed and your friend's faith may have grown into a tree, but it is the same faith—it clings to the same Christ and will produce the same eternal results in the salvation of the soul! Come, then, let us spiritually shake hands, again, over this second point. First, we are closely related to one another. Secondly, we possess a common faith, which is a wonderful bond of union between us.

III. Carefully note the third link. It is this—WE HAVE A MUTUAL BENEDICTION, for Paul wishes for Titus, "Grace, mercy and peace." This is just what Titus would have wished for Paul if he had been sending him a benediction! And I wish to you, Beloved, "Grace, mercy and peace," and

I think you are, in your hearts, wishing for me, also, "Grace, mercy, and peace." We all alike need these three choice favors!

First, we need "*Grace*" *to help*. I know how it is with the weak Believer—he sees some brave Christian doing mighty works for God and he says, "Oh, I wish that I were like he is! Oh, that I were as strong as he is!" And he gets the notion that this more prominent worker has no fainting fits or weaknesses such as he has. Oh, no—he supposes that his Brother's head is bathed in everlasting sunshine and that his heart is continually flooded with rivers of delight! That shows, my Friend, that you are greatly mistaken, for the most eminent saint has no more Grace to give away than the least in the family of God has! I sometimes wish that I could rid the minds of our dear trembling friends, Miss Much-Afraid and Mr. Despondency, of the ideas they have concerning some of us to whom they look up with esteem. I am not going to let you into *all* our secrets, but, believe me, our heads ache as much as yours and our eyes are sometimes as wet with tears as ever yours are! Yes, and our hearts get quite as heavy as yours do.

"Yes," you say, "very likely, but then, somehow or other, you are stronger than we are." Just so, but suppose you have to carry 50 pounds and you can carry that and no more? Well, you have strength enough for your task. If another man has to carry 100 pounds and he can just carry that, and no more, he is in exactly the same condition as you are! Here is a Brother who has a large measure full of manna which he is carrying for the supply of his family. Here is another who has quite a small measure and, as he carries it into his tent, he says to himself, "Oh, I wish that I had that great bushel of manna that my Brother took into his tent just now." Yes, but listen—"he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." Mark you, I do not discourage the attempt to gather much Grace, I would urge you to get all you can of it, for, however much you gather, you will have none too much, but I would discourage your despair if there should seem to be but little falling to your share, for you shall have no need! The fact is, all of us need Grace. You who preach the Gospel, you who are deacons, you who are elders, you who teach the infant class, you who can only give away a tract—you must do all these works with Grace or else you will not really do them at all! And our need of Grace is a common meeting place for us all. Only Grace can save you and only Grace can save me—and the Grace of God shall be given to us and all Believers as we have need of it.

Our next need is, "*mercy*" *to forgive*. Titus, perhaps, thought to himself, "Well, Paul wishes mercy for me, but can hardly wish it for himself, for he is such an eminent servant of God, so holy, so consecrated, so zealous, so self-denying that he does not need mercy." I reminded you, in our reading, that Paul, in writing to a Church, says, "Grace be to you, and peace," but when he writes to a minister, he says, "Grace, *mercy* and peace." It looks as though ministers needed more mercy than their people did! And it is my firm conviction that the more eminent is their office and the more remarkable is their usefulness in the service of God, the more mercy they require! Brothers, how can we meet our responsibilities unless we constantly cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us"? How can we deal

faithfully with the souls committed to our charge and be clear of the blood of all men, unless the Lord shall have mercy upon us, and upon us beyond all others?

All of us, then, need mercy. I do. Do not you? You are only a plain man with a family growing up around you, but you need mercy for your sins as the head of the household. Perhaps you are only a domestic servant, my Sister, but you need mercy even in that humble calling of yours. You, perhaps, dear Friend, are very rich—oh, you need much mercy! And you, on the other hand, are very poor—I am sure that you need mercy. Some of you are in good health. You need mercy lest you should pervert that strength to an evil purpose. Others of you are very sickly—you may well cry for mercy, that you may bear up under your many pains and depressions of spirit. We all need mercy. So that is another point in which we are one.

The third word of the benediction is "*peace*" *to comfort*. I hope that many of us know what peace of conscience means, what peace with God means and what peace with man means. If God has given us His peace, it is a treasure of untold value, "the pearl of great price." To be at peace with God is better than to be a millionaire, or Czar of all the Russias. Peace of mind, restfulness of heart, quiet of spirit, deliverance from care, from quarrelling, from complaining—I know that I need that kind of peace—and you need it, too, do you not? You need it in your family, in your business, in your own hearts! Well, then, here we meet, again, having this same need of peace and, when we get it, we meet once more in finding the same delicious enjoyment of it! I wish to you, Beloved, now and henceforth, Grace, mercy and peace! And I believe that you wish the same to me. And herein, again, we join our hands and bless God that we feel true union of heart.

IV. Upon the next part of my subject, which is more weighty, still, I must say but little. It is this—"Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." That is, WE ARE ONE IN THE SOURCE OF EVERY BLESSING.

All good comes to us from God the Father through the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. I love to think of this—that all the Grace, mercy and peace that come to you—and all the Grace, mercy and peace that come to me, come from the heart of God! How many wagons there are upon the road of Grace and all of them heavily laden! One stops at that Brother's door and another waits at this Sister's gate, but they all started from one spot. Look on the side of the wagons and you will see the name of the same Proprietor on every one of them! "The chariots of God are twenty thousand," but they are all the Lord's, so that whatever Grace, mercy and peace come to us at all, come from the same place! Get to the very foundation of this Truth of God and you will see that we who believe all eat bread baked in the same oven, our clothes come out of the same wardrobe, the water that we drink comes from the same Rock! Yes, and the shoes that we wear were made by the same mighty Worker who bade Moses say to Israel of old, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be." You have not anything that is worth having but what your Father gave to you! And your Father is *my*

Father—and the hand that passes the blessing to you passes the blessing to me and to the whole family of Believers!

These blessings not only all come from the same source, but *they all come by the same channel*—"the Lord Jesus Christ." There is the sacred blood mark on every Covenant blessing, whether you have it, or your Brother has it, or some Christian far away in India gets it. It all comes by the same Divinely-appointed Channel—the Man, the God, Christ Jesus our Lord! I do not know how you feel about this matter, but it seems to me as if this ought to bind us very closely together. I remember when I first left my grandfather, with whom I had been brought up as a little child, how grieved I was to part from him. It was the great sorrow of my little life. Grandfather seemed very sorry, too, and we had a cry together. He did not quite know what to say to me, but he said, "Now child, tonight, when the moon shines and you look at it, don't forget that it is the same moon your grandfather will be looking at." And for years, as a child, I used to love the moon because I thought that my grandfather's eyes and my own somehow met there on the moon! How much better it is to think that you, dear Friend, going so far away to Australia, are looking to the Savior, while we are doing the same thing, here, and so our eyes meet! You go to God at the Mercy Seat in prayer and that is just where we go—so, after all, we pray at the same sacred spot and our petitions meet at the great Throne of Mercy! Thus we are made to feel our blessed union in Christ.

Some people say that they try to remember other people, but if you really love them, you will not "try" to remember them—you will not be able to keep from remembering them! Their image will come up before your mind's eye. You cannot avoid it and you will not wish to avoid it. So, dear Friends, we will not say that we will try to remember each other while we are parted a while—but every blessing that comes to us shall remind us that it comes from our Father, through Jesus Christ our Mediator—and so we shall feel that we are truly one.

V. Then, to close, there is one more point of union and that lies in OUR COMMON RELATIONSHIP TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. See how Paul puts it, "The Lord Jesus Christ our Savior."

I must dwell briefly upon every word of this title. First, Jesus is *Lord* to all His people—and equally *to be obeyed by them all, and adored by them all*. It is important that, with bowed knee and reverent love, we call Him Lord and God. We put our finger into the print of the nails and the wound in His side, confessing that He is and must be real Man, but, at the same moment, we cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." I cannot pretend to have any union with the man who cannot, from his heart, say that! If you do not count Christ to be God, well, go your way, my fellow man, and I will go mine—but your way and my way cannot be the same. We know that this is the Christ of God, and he who does not know it needs to be taught of God the very first principles of the Gospel. So, you see, we have a true unity in the Lordship of Christ—we desire, as one man, to be obedient to all His commands and to worship Him as "very God of very God."

Then comes the next word, "the Lord Jesus Christ." That will come again when I speak of the word, "Savior," so I pass on to the following word, "the Lord Jesus Christ." He is, to all of us who believe, the Anointed One, so anointed that every Word that Jesus Christ has spoken is to us Infallibly Inspired. We believe in Jesus, not only as men say they do, today, but we *really* believe in Jesus, for we believe in His Doctrine, in that which He, Himself spoke, and in that which He spoke by His Inspired Apostles. We cannot separate between Christ and the Truth He came to preach, and the work He came to do—nor will we attempt to do so. He is to us the Anointed of God, as Prophet, Priest and King—and we accept Him in all the offices for which He bears that anointing, do we not, my Brothers and Sisters? I know that we do! As Brothers and Sisters in one common faith, we rejoice in the common Christ whose anointing has fallen upon us, too. Though we are but as the skirts of the garment of our Great High Priest, yet the holy oil upon His head has come down even to us, as it is written, "you have an unction from the Holy One."

The Apostle further writes, "The Lord Jesus Christ *our Savior*." Sometimes, in the Bible, we find the Lord Jesus Christ called, "*a* Savior." "Unto you is born in the city of David *a* Savior, which is Christ the Lord." That is good, but it is not good enough for what poor sinners need. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not *a* Savior among other saviors, though He does instrumentally make His people saviors, as it is written, "saviors shall come up on Mount Zion; and happy are they who, as instruments in His hands, save souls from death, and hide multitudes of sins." But Jesus is also called "*the* Savior." He is "*the* Savior of all men, specially of those that believe"—the Savior, *par excellence*.

Then, next, He is *my* Savior, as Mary sang, "My spirit has rejoiced in God *my* Savior." Oh, that is sweet, indeed—to get a personal grip of Him and to know that He has saved me from despair, from sin, from the power of evil, from death, from Hell! But there is, in some respects, a superior sweetness in this plural pronoun, "*our* Savior." Selfishness is gone when we come to feel an intense delight in this Truth of God—that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of many more beside ourselves. "*Our* Savior"—does not this bind us to one another? A common delight in one person is one of the strongest bands of sympathetic union that can bind men together—and a common obligation to some one superior Being becomes a great reason for our being knit together in love. My Savior, your Savior, our Savior—"The Lord Jesus Christ our Savior." Whenever we feel any disposition to break off from this Brother and from that, whom we know to be, after all, saved in the Lord, let us come together with a fresh clasp of the hands as we say to one another, "We rejoice in our Savior and we are one in Him."

What I want to say—as a parting word, before I leave you once more for my season of rest—is just this. Let us keep close together, now, shoulder to shoulder, if ever we did so in all our lives. "Close your ranks!" must be the message to the faithful in these evil days. Let us feel heart touching heart in the deepest and truest Christian affection, for, in proportion as we are welded together in love, we shall be strong for all the practical purposes for which the Holy Spirit intends a Church to be used.

These 34 years—is not that the number?—they are so many, I begin to forget the number—a third of a century have I served among you as a preacher of the Gospel! I am always fearing that I shall get "flat, stale and unprofitable," and that my voice will cease to have any music for you, but there is one thing I know, from the first day I came among you until now, I have preached nothing but "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God!" "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified!" And I am not afraid that that *Gospel* will ever get "flat, stale, or unprofitable." And this is the golden chain which has bound us together in holy fellowship. This is the foundation on which we have built—"One Lord, one faith, one Baptism." Yes, one Baptism—there are others who hold another baptism, but we know of no outward baptism but the *immersion* of the Believer into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! And upon this point we are all agreed, as we are upon the rest of the articles of our faith.

So, being one, let us show to all the world what the power of Christian unity really is! Keep together in the Prayer Meetings. Never let those precious gatherings decay or drop. If you have come together in large numbers—and you have in my presence—do so *much more in my absence.* Let each one feel bound to meet with his Brothers and Sisters in prayer. I am longing for a genuine revival of religion—a revival of religion *everywhere*—and I think I can see signs that it is coming. I find that many of the Baptist ministers who love the Gospel are going over the groundwork, preaching the fundamental doctrines more than they ever did —that is a good thing. I find that the Churches are meeting together for prayer at this juncture more than they have done, seeking that God will help and guide them to be faithful—that also is a good thing.

And people are talking about the plan of salvation—on the tops of omnibuses and in the railway carriages—everywhere it comes up as a subject of debate! In the daily papers the same theme is brought forward, for which I thank God. And though I have had to bear my share of reproach for the Truth's sake, yet I joyfully accept it. Anything which can call public attention to the Gospel of Christ is a help to us and I believe that the attention called to this question is hopeful, that the discussion of it by so many is still *more* hopeful and that the firm adherence to the faith, which I see in so many, will be attended by an intense zeal for the conversion of souls—and then we shall see a revival. God has been hindered and hampered by the false doctrine and heresy that have been cherished in so many of the churches—and the Spirit of God has been grieved and driven away by the utter rottenness of worldliness that has been indulged in by so many professing Christians. By God's Grace we have let a little light into this darkness. By God's Grace we have opened a door, here and there, and a clear cold draft is blowing out some of the fog and the evil gases of the stagnant atmosphere that has been poisoning our people far too long.

Now is our time, Brothers and Sisters! Let us, as one man, pray God to send this benediction from on high—"Grace, mercy and peace." I charge you, while I am away, to be instant in and out of season about this matter and to let this be a special object of supplication with the members of this Church—that we should have a revival of religion here,

at any rate, while the pastor is away. It is better for it to come while he is away, for nobody will then put the credit of it upon any instrument. Break out, heavenly fire! Descend! Descend! Descend! Let the sacrifice be consumed!

As for you who do not know and love the Lord, we love you, we desire to bring you into the blessed circle of love by the door of faith in Christ. Look alone to Jesus Christ, who is the only way of salvation for you as for us. Oh, that you would look to Him and live! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
TITUS 1; 2.

While reading this chapter we must understand that Titus was sent to Crete to superintend the preaching of the Gospel throughout that island. Crete was, at that time, inhabited by a people who were only partially civilized, and sunk in the very worst of vices. Paul, therefore, tells Titus to speak to them about things which would hardly be mentioned to Christians nowadays.

Titus 1:1-4. *Paul, a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but has in due times manifested His Word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, my own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.* You have probably noticed that Paul's benediction, when he is writing to a minister, is always. "Grace, mercy and peace." Writing to Churches, his usual formula is, "Grace be to you and peace," but God's servants, called to the work of the ministry, need very special "mercy"—as if the higher the office, the greater the liability to sin and, therefore, in his Pastoral Epistles, whether he is addressing Titus or Timothy, Paul wishes for his sons in the faith, "Grace, mercy and peace." Oh, what a mercy it will be for any of us ministers if, at the last, we are clear of the blood of all men! If, having been called to preach the Gospel, we shall do it so faithfully as to be acquitted and even rewarded by our Lord and Master, it will be mercy upon mercy! [This "charge" of the beloved Pastor has even more force and pathos now that he has gone "away" to Heaven.]

5, 6. *For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you: if any are blameless, the husband of one wife.* For there were many converts, there, who had two or three wives. Whatever position they might be permitted to occupy in the Church, they could not become officers—they must keep in the rear rank.

6-12. *Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the*

faithful Word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own. According to Jerome, this was Epimenides, a prophet-poet who lived in Crete in the sixth century before Christ.

12. *Said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.* They were a degraded people and, therefore, those who would teach them had a most difficult task and needed great Grace. Paul exhorts Titus that only specially fit men—men whose example would have influence and whose characters would have weight—should be allowed to be elders in such Churches.

13-16. *This witness is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* This was bad soil, but it had to be plowed, sown and, with an Almighty God at the back of the Gospel plower and sower, a fruitful harvest came even in Crete! We need not be afraid of the adaptation of the Gospel to the lowest of the low. If there is any quarter of the town where the people are more sunken in vice than anywhere else, there the Gospel is to be carried with more prayer and more faith than anywhere else! Depend upon it, God can bless His Word anywhere—among Cretans or among any other sort of degraded people.

Titus 2:1. *But speak you the things which become sound doctrine.* There are certain things which are suitable to go with sound doctrine—they are meet and fit and appropriate thereto.

2. *That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.* Among the heathen, old men often gave themselves up to drunkenness and gluttony. So, now, this is the teaching that is to be given to aged Christian men. They need faith, love and patience, as well as the virtues of sobriety, gravity and temperance! The infirmities of old age often create petulance, so the Grace of God is to make the venerable Christian to be full of faith, love and patience.

3. *The aged women, likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.* Old women also among the heathen were often addicted to the taking of much wine, so here they are cautioned against it by the Spirit of God. They are also tempted to spread slanderous reports against people—having little to do in their old age, they are apt to do that little by way of mischief—so they are warned that they are not to be "false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things." And how beautifully can an aged Christian woman, by her kindly example, be a teacher of good things! There is no more charming sight under Heaven, I think, than that of an elderly Christian lady whose words and whose whole life are such as becomes the Gospel of Christ.

4, 5. *That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed.* There were some women who supposed that the moment they became Christians, they were to run about everywhere. "No," says the Apostle, "let them stay at home." There is no gain to the Christian Church when the love, the industry and the zeal, which ought to make a happy home, are squandered upon something else. The young women of Crete appear to have been such that they needed to be taught "to love their husbands." That expression does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. Christian women do not need to be told to love their husbands, but these Cretans, just brought out of the slough of sin, had to be taught even *this* lesson. Oh, what a blessing is love in the marriage relationship! And what a gracious influence love has upon children! How are they to be brought up aright except the whole house be perfumed with love?

6. *Young men, likewise, exhort to be sober-minded.* That exhortation is as necessary in London as it was in Crete! Young men often know a great deal, or think they do—and they are very apt to be intoxicated with the idea of knowing so much and being able to do so much—so that the exhortation to them is to "be sober-minded."

7-9. *In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants*—Or, as it might and should be rendered, "bond-slaves."

9, 10. *To be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining.* Not picking and stealing, which very naturally was the common habit of slaves—and who wonders at it in their wretched condition?

10. *But showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.* Is not that a wonderful passage? Here is a slave, able to be an ornament to the Gospel of Christ! This blessed Gospel is not sent only to kings and princes! When Paul preached it, the great mass of the population were in cruel bondage, treated like dogs, or even worse. Yet the Gospel even had a message for them—it told them that they might, by a godly character, adorn the doctrine of God, their Savior!

11-15. *For the Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you.*

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.

FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP
NO. 2440

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1887.

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
1 Corinthians 4:2.

IT is well that our dear Brothers and Sisters should make a right account of us. Paul says, in the verse preceding our text, "Let a man so think of us," for there are some who make a wrong reckoning as to the ministers of the Gospel. Some go to an extreme, for they glory in men. One glories in Paul, who is so deep in doctrine, another in Cephas, who is so energetic and plainspoken, another in Apollos, who is so exceedingly eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures. But Paul says, in the latter verses of the third chapter, "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." You do not belong to your ministers, you must not put yourselves down as followers of *them*—you belong to Christ and Christ, Himself—and all His ministers belong to you.

But while some erred in thinking too much of their ministers, as no doubt they still do—God deliver them from such a delusion—there were, no doubt, others who erred in not thinking enough of them, not appreciating their position and condition so as to sympathize with them and *pray* for them. Had they known to what a responsible office they were called and what was required at their hands, they would lovingly have borne them upon their hearts, and gone with their names to the Mercy Seat in continual prayer. Hence, it is very important that men should so think of us as to judge us correctly, so that while they do not rely upon us in any wrong sense, they may, at the same time, feel an affectionate sympathy with us and constantly bear us up before the Throne of Grace.

Paul goes on to tell us how we ought to think of the ministers of Christ. The word should be, "servants," of Christ. There is a great respectability about the word, "minister," which really does not belong to it, for, if you take it to pieces, it means an under-rower, one of those men who had to take an oar on the lowest benches of the slave ships. There were three benches for the rowers and it was a hard task for all who were at the oars—but to the under-rowers, who had to bend to their work in the most trying position as they sent the galley flying through the water, it was stern toil, indeed! Now, God's ministers, if they act as they should, are under-rowers of Christ. They are tugging away at a very heavy oar and they may well ask you to pray that as they use up their strength,

fresh force may be imparted to them from the God of All Power, that they may not labor in vain, nor spend their strength for nothing!

We ask men, therefore, to think of us as servants, not as masters. The word, "bishop," has come to have a wonderful significance about it which is not in the least degree Scriptural. We are simply to be shepherds of the sheep—and a shepherd is no great lord. He is the servant of all the sheep and though he leads them, it is by *going* first, taking the brunt of all that comes, and finding out the best places for them to feed and to rest. Let a man so think of us as servants, but not merely as servants to the Church, certainly not as servants to men, but as servants of Christ! That is our *honor* as ministers—we serve the Lord Jesus Christ—the best of Masters! But, as He deserves to have the best of servants, the responsibility of the position weighs down the honor attached to it. Oh, if they who serve men should serve them faithfully, how much more should they be found faithful who are the servants of Christ!

Then the Apostle adds that men are to think of us as stewards. And it is about *that* office that I am going to speak to you—"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Although my text, no doubt, refers, in the first place, to those who labor in word and doctrine, to whom it is a life's vocation, yet *all the people of God are stewards*, and each child of God, in his own way and in his own place, should reckon that whatever gift he has should be used for the Lord Jesus Christ, and laid out for Him. And he should also remember that he is *made* one of the Lord's stewards and that it is required of him that he be found faithful. And I may even add that every *unconverted* man has a stewardship to fulfill. As God's creature, he is bound to be God's servant—and at the Last Great Day he will have to give an account of every opportunity and capacity for service which God has given to him! And woe unto him if he is found an unfaithful steward in the day of his Lord's reckoning!

If I should seem to speak rather more about ministers than about anybody else, I will ask you kindly to pick out all that belongs to yourselves, you who are private Christians, and you who are not Christians at all. I pray the Lord to make use of what I say to myself and then to you who are His people—and to those, also, who *are* not His people—that they may be pricked to the heart and made to feel how ungenerously they have acted towards the great Lord of the house. To begin, then, I will first ask—*how are we stewards*? Secondly, if stewards, *how are we to behave*? Next, *how are we in danger of misbehaving*? And, lastly, *what will be the result of right behavior or of misbehavior in those who are stewards*?

I. First, then, HOW ARE WE STEWARDS?

Well, God's ministers are stewards, first, *as appointed to look after other servants*. You know, dear Friend, if you are a servant, you have enough to do to mind your own work. But if you happen to be an upper servant, such as a steward is, you have not only your own work to mind, but it is a part of your own work to look after the work of other people. There are some who are so foolish that they look only at the *honor* of this position, whereas, if they were wise, they would look more at the *respon-*

sibility of it. Brothers and Sisters, if I had my choice, I would rather look after a horse than look after a man! The second is much the more difficult animal to manage! And to look after *many men*—oh, this is, indeed, a difficult task!

I had an old friend, who was, for 40 years, a shepherd, and after that he became a minister—and he lived to be 40 years a shepherd in a spiritual sense. I asked him, once, "Which was the easier flock to manage?" "Oh!," he replied, "the second flock of sheep was a deal more sheepish than the first." I understood what he meant. They say that sheep have as many diseases as there are days in the year. Yes, but *men* have as many complaints as there are *minutes* in the year! It is not long that they are free from one malady or another! I mean, men and women—all those that belong to the spiritual flock of which the minister is the shepherd—there is a certain form of trouble arising out of each one. True, there is a certain amount of comfort and joy arising out of every Christian, but there is a measure of difficulty that must come to the steward from everyone of his fellow servants. It is by no means a position which any man who understands it might desire for himself! The real steward is one who has been *appointed* to the position—and if he is not appointed, why, he has no right to be a steward at all! It is the great Master of the house who calls this one or that one to look after the other servants—and it is from this calling that he has the right to interfere in any respect with them.

Next, notice that the servants of God—whether called ministers or not—those who are really so, are stewards *because they are under the Master's near command*. An ordinary servant in God's house may take his orders from the steward, but the steward takes no orders from anybody but the Master and, therefore, he is in an evil case and the household is in an evil case, too, if he does not often resort to the Master—if he does not distinctly recognize his position as an underling of his Master—and if he does not so keep up his daily fellowship with the Master that he, himself, knows the Master's mind and is able to communicate it to his fellow servants.

There are many of you, dear Friends, who have around you your children, your servants, your fellow workers. Well, in that respect, you are a steward to them—they have to do a good deal that you tell them. Then do, I pray you—and I speak this to myself as well as to you—let us wait upon the Master! Let us come forth to speak to our fellow servants, not our own words, but the words of Him who is Master and Lord to the whole household! How beautifully Jesus, the greatest of all stewards, did this! How constantly He said, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works." He was always referring those who were His brethren back to the great Head of the family—and He did not speak without His Father's authority. Having taken up the position of a subordinate in order to work out our redemption, He continually declared that He was His Father's servant.

It is an ill day for us when we begin to think that our thoughts are to be given out in the house instead of the Master's thoughts! It is not for us to deliver our own speculations, but to go straight away to the Word of

God and, by the teaching of the indwelling Spirit, to come forth to the people with what we have *received*—not what we have *invented*! You shall find no power, my Brothers and Sisters, in doing Christian work unless you keep on doing it as receiving your mission and commission from the great Lord of All!

I recollect how McCheyne says, "It is God's Word that saves, not our comment on God's Word." And I am sure that it is so. It is God at the back of the steward who blesses all in the household. But when the steward does not go to the Master and get his orders from Him, he soon puts everything into confusion. He loses his own standing and he is apt to do desperate mischief to all who are round about him.

Then, the true steward *is called upon to give an account*—and if he does it often, so much the better! I am persuaded that, in the things of God as well as between man and man, "short reckonings make long friends," and if we will often go to our Master with our service and present it to Him, and overhaul it under His Divine Guidance, confessing our shortcomings and blessing Him for every particle of success that has attended it, we shall do much better than if we go on for a long stretch without a reference to Him. Brothers and Sisters, you who are teaching your classes of boys or girls, bring your Sunday work to the Lord at the end of the Sabbath! And when we have finished a sermon, those of us who stand up to preach, let us not be satisfied until we have brought that piece of our work under our Master's eyes. I am sure that if the steward can get to the side of his Master every evening, or every morning say to Him, "We did such and such yesterday, and there is such and such which we propose to do today," that is the way for the house to be well-ordered! Things go right when there is no absentee landlord, but when the great Master is always close at hand and the steward constantly goes to Him with an account of all his work!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us constantly do this! We do not live near enough to God, do we? I know that some of you wait upon Him day and night and you abide under the shadow of the Almighty, but I fear that there are some workers who forget to do this. We should work with the hands of Martha, but yet keep near the Master with the heart of Mary! We need a combination of activity and meditation. When we get that—when we inwardly retire for consultation with our Lord and then come out actively to labor for our Lord—then shall we be good stewards in the little part of the great house with which He has entrusted us.

Further, a steward is a man who *is put in trust with his master's goods*. This is the main point of his stewardship— nothing is his own—it is all his master's. When he begins to open an account of his own, it is wonderful how apt he is to mistake what is his master's and to call it his own and, by-and-by, he gets into a muddle and cannot distinguish his master's accounts from his own. Oh, it is a glorious thing when you have not any, "own"—when you do not live for yourself at all, but wholly for Christ! Then you will not make any blunders! There will not be any of Christ's property getting into your cash account, so that you will have a

difficulty in disentangling it. "No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life," for he can say—

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's,"

"and all the business I have here below is His. I have no sub-ends or secondary objectives, but all I have and am is for Him." Then it is easy to keep our accounts and to make no mistakes in them.

The true steward is put in trust with his master's property, first, to protect it. Oh, with what earnestness ought we to guard the Gospel of Christ! With what holy valor ought we to contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints! "Hold fast the form of sound words," wrote Paul to Timothy—not only the words, but the particular *form* of them which the Apostle had delivered! Not merely sound doctrine, but the very words in which those doctrines had been made to take shape! The true steward is to defend his master's treasure with his very life. The Lord has put us in trust with the Gospel—and all the people of God, in their measure—have also become trustees of those inestimably precious doctrines wherein will be found the Glory of God and the salvation of the sons of men! So we are to defend our Master's property.

And next, we are to dispense it. It is the steward who provides for the table of the household. He brings out of that treasury things new and old. He never forgets, when the table is spread, to put the bread and the salt on it. The bread is Christ, Himself, on which we feed. And the salt is the Grace of which we cannot have too much. The true steward does not starve the children, but he sees that each one is fed with convenient food. To one he brings milk, for he is a babe. To another, he gives strong meat, for he is a man who has had his senses exercised to discern between good and evil. The steward keeps his master's stores and sees that they are not wasted—but he also takes care to magnify his master's liberality by seeing that none of the household know any need.

I have known some who pretended to be stewards of Christ who evidently did not understand the business. There was an old fable of a man who gave bones to the sheep and grass to the dogs, but neither of them did well on such fare. And some preaching seems to me just like that! The preacher assumes, in his opening prayer, that all his hearers are converted, and the whole service goes on as if everybody was a Christian! And yet, if you listen carefully, you will hear that there is an undertone implying that nobody is really saved and that everybody is saved in imagination. Brothers, if we cannot discern between the righteous and the wicked, we shall never be as God's mouth to our hearers! If we have not a javelin for God's foes, as well as butter in a lordly dish for His friends, He will never make use of us as stewards in His house. There is much Grace needed in the dispensing of our Master's goods—the rightly dividing of the Word of God—and bringing out every Truth of God in due proportion and in due season,

These are two parts of the steward's business—to protect his master's property and to dispense it.

Besides this, he is to use his master's property for his master's benefit. The goods entrusted to him are to be put out to interest, or used in busi-

ness to bring in profit for his master. I trust that there are many of us here present who are using the Gospel for the glory of Christ. What little we know, we try to proclaim, that sinners may be converted and that the Savior may be glorified. It is a wonderful thing for us to have the Bible, is it not? But oh, to use the Bible every day so as to bring Glory to God! It is a good thing even to be a tract-distributor, or to do the least service in the Kingdom of Christ, but the one point for us to aim at is to do it so that the profit of it may come, not to us, but to our Master! The steward must not get to trading on his own account. As I have said before, if he does that, there is apt to be a lot of mistakes made in the reckoning! Everything that the steward does is for his master.

Abraham said, "The steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus," and Abraham trusted him to go and find a wife for Isaac. So does our Lord use us and trust us, as His stewards. Our great God trusts us to go and find a spouse for Christ—and our business is to go and discover her, to find her out and ask her to come with us that she may be joined to that blessed Lord of All, the Son of the Great Father, to whom He has left the inheritance. Happy are we, when, like the steward of Abraham, we can bring back the beloved one for our Master's Son! This is a part of our work, to make use of everything that the Master entrusts to us for His own dear Son and to look upon the Church with which we have to deal as the bride we are to bring to Jesus, that she may be married to Him forever.

I will say no more upon the first part of my subject except this—*a steward is charged with the general care of the family*. He has not merely to look after the stores, but he has to take care of *all* the family. The steward of the olden times used to reckon all that belonged to his master as if it were his own—and he got into the habit of talking of it in that way. His Lordship once asked his steward, "What is that coming up the drive?" "Oh," he answered, "it is our horse and carriage, my Lord." "*Our* horse and carriage?" exclaimed the nobleman, "and who may be in it?" "Oh, my Lord," replied the faithful servant, "it is our wife and children!"

Exactly so—the man had come to look upon everything that belonged to his master as belonging to himself—and that is the spirit which our Lord would have us cultivate! Those children of His, they are *our* children. Those that are newly converted to God, oh, they are especially ours and we love them dearly! And this great Church—well, it is a bride to us even as it is to Christ. Our whole life is given up to the blessed service to which Christ has given up Himself. Oh, that we could come anywhere near to this ideal of what a true steward should be! God help us to do so!

II. Our second enquiry is "HOW ARE WE WHO ARE STEWARDS TO BEHAVE?" Our text supplies the answer—"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Note, the Apostle does not say, "it is required in stewards, that a man be found brilliant." No minister will be blamed if he does not prove to be brilliant, nor even if he should not be successful. We shall not be condemned even if the seed does not spring up, provided that we sow it. You are responsible, not for the *result* of what you do, but for doing it hon-

estly, sincerely, devoutly, prayerfully, believingly. I do not think that in such a case you will be unsuccessful—certainly not as *God* judges success. Still, the Apostle's point is that "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." What, then, should each one of us be with regard to faithfulness?

First, *faithful to our Master*. Oh, whatever we do, let us not be traitors to Him! Let us not be apparently doing His work, yet not really doing it. Let us not be preaching without praying. Let us not be talking about doing good without always trusting in Him without whom nothing *can* be good, or strong, or right! O God, may we, each of us, be able to say at the last, "I am clear of the blood of all men"! If we have dealt truly with our Master, if we can feel that we are sincerely seeking not our own glory, but His Glory, and working not for men, but for Him alone, it is well with us.

Next, we must each one be *faithful to our office*, whatever that office may be. If you, as stewards of Christ, are called to be ministers, be faithful to your ministry. If you are called to have substance, and to give it away, give it with cheerfulness and be faithful in your office. If you are called to teach half-a-dozen children, and no more, it is quite enough to give an account for at the last—so be faithful to your office. Do not run about finding fault with your fellow servants and thinking that you could do their work better if you had it to do. But oh, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of His great Grace, do what you have to do with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. Make full proof of your ministry, whatever that ministry is.

Then, next, *be faithful to the goods committed to you*. I have already dwelt upon the necessity of earnestly defending the faith. Oh, do not, I pray you, tolerate in yourselves any quibbling at God's Word, any picking and choosing out of the great Truths of Inspiration! Endeavor to know the Lord's way, the Lord's truth, the Lord's life and in way, truth and life, follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Search the Scriptures and follow where the Scriptures lead you. Let no book composed by the wisest of men dictate your conscience. Remember that the Bible, and the Bible, alone, has the stamp of Infallibility upon it. Follow its guidance and so be faithful to the treasure that is entrusted to your hands. Had good men, in past ages, been but faithful to the Word of the Lord, there had not been so much of schism, heresy and false doctrine in the world. And if all professing Christians shall always be faithful to the pure Word of God, then will come the days of the true unity of the Church of Christ, and the conquest of the world by Christ!

Next, we are bound to be *faithful to every person in the household*. This is a difficult work, but let us try to accomplish it. All of us, according as we are put into the stewardship, must labor for the good of all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. We sang just now—

"Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would refuse to feed?"

and I hope that our answer is," No, great Shepherd of Israel, there is not a single lamb in all Your flock which we do not reckon to be better than ourselves." Do you not sometimes feel as if, if you could be as sure of being right as the very least of the Lord's family, you would be perfectly

content? We long to rise to the greatest heights of holiness and consecration, but yet, if we are allowed to wash the saints' feet, it will be a great honor for us. To do *anything* for Jesus, to be a doormat at the Temple gate, is a high privilege for any of us! Let us try, then, to do all that we ought to do in love and kindness to all the members of our Master's household.

And then we must be *faithful to the outside world as well*. You see, a steward who looked to everything indoors, and then allowed people out of doors to cheat his master and run away with his goods, would not be a faithful steward! And you and I have much to do with the souls of men *outside* the Church of Christ. Oh, what a world this is! What a world it is! Shall we be clear of the blood of all these millions in London? Ride or walk from one end of this great city to another and see if you do not feel a mountain of granite pressing on your soul! O Lord, what can we do? "Who is sufficient for these things?" Living in such an age as this and in such a thronged city as this, oh, how shall we be faithful to all the people?

When George Fox was dying, he said, "I am clear, I am clear." I have envied him a thousand times, for I believe the Quaker *was* clear of the blood of men. He said many odd things and some things he had better not have said, but he never kept back anything that seemed to come from his soul. It mattered not to whom he spoke—whether it was to the king or to a beggar—he said what he believed, without fear of mortal man. Think of brave John Knox, of whom they could say when they buried him, "Here lies he who never feared the face of man." O stewards of God—and I have already said that all you Christians are, in your measure, stewards of Christ—may this be said of you! "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." I have shown you what a wide field that one requirement covers—only the Grace of God can be sufficient for us that we may be found faithful.

III. Now, very briefly, indeed, I want to answer the third question, HOW ARE WE, IN OUR STEWARDSHIP, IN DANGER OF MISBEHAVING? Well, we can very readily misbehave *by acting as if we were masters*. You know the tendency of Jack in office—let us avoid anything like that. Remember what our Lord said about the man who began to domineer over his fellow servants and to beat them. This is *not* the way for a steward to behave, for he is, himself, only a servant. He has to look after other servants but his master will look after him—and if he gives himself great airs, he must beware lest his master should dismiss him from his service, and say to him, "You shall no longer be steward."

Next, a great deal of misbehavior is caused by endeavoring to please men. If the steward begins to try to please his fellow servants and to curry favor with them that they may speak well of him, he will very soon be a traitor to his master. O dear Friends, seek to please men for their good to edification, but never forget that he who is the servant of men cannot be the servant of God, for "no man can serve two masters." May the Lord help us to feel that we are not judged of men's judgment, but

that we are going to do our duty as under the great Taskmaster's own eyes!

Next, we can very much injure our stewardship *by idling, or trifling, or growing careless, or leaving our hearts out of our work*. We can do this in the Sunday school and we can do this in the pulpit! When a man's heart is in his service, he does not need to tell you that it is, for you can soon see it. And I believe that there is more power in downright sincerity than in all the talent that God ever gave to men! A simple, humble, lowly speaker who only says what the Holy Spirit prompts him to say—and who is quite indifferent about how he says it so long as he can say it in a right spirit—he is the man who will reach the hearts of other men! Brothers, if we begin turning over our words, so as to find out comely syllables with which we may please and tickle human ears, we shall lose all power over our hearers! I think that the very best nosegay we can ever give to our friends may be made by plucking a handful of field flowers just as we find them, and then saying, "These grew in God's garden. We have not arranged them very prettily, for their innate beauty is such that anything artificial would but injure them." Oh, let us see to it that we live wholly and alone for this great work of winning souls and glorifying our Master—and let us always speak with the accent of conviction!

If you do not believe the Gospel, do not tell it to others! But if you *do* believe it, say it as if you meant it! I read, the other day, the story of a minister, whose boys came to him and asked if they might go to a certain show, and he said, "Well my dear boys, I—I—I—I hardly like it. I will show you, by-and-by, the objections there are to it. I do not decidedly forbid you"—and the boys were out of the room in a minute! They ran off to their companion and said, "Jack, we may go." Yes, their father's hesitation was quite enough for them. He was going to say, "I do not decidedly forbid you, but, but, but"—only the boys did not care about his, "buts." And there are some ministers who, in preaching, say that a false doctrine is true, to some extent, only there are certain objections, difficulties and so on. People do not wait to hear the objections and difficulties, but off they go at once with a bit of bad doctrine! It is often so, and it is a pity that it should be so. Ah, me, this trifling with Divine Truth, this playing with God's Word will be sure to do an infinite deal of mischief and mar the stewardship of any man who yields to it!

Next, we can prove ourselves unfaithful stewards *by misusing our Master's goods*, employing what He entrusted to us for some other end than His Glory, or *by neglecting some of the household*. We may so preach that there is never any milk for babes and, on the other hand, we may so preach that there is never a morsel of meat for men—and the milk may be so watery that it is not good enough even for babes! It is a sin to neglect any one member of the household, for we must be found faithful to them all if we would be judged to be faithful at all.

We can also misbehave ourselves as stewards *by conniving at whatever is wrong in our fellow servants*. "Anything for a peaceful life!" is the motto of the unfaithful steward. "Let men live as they like. We cannot rebuke them because then they might quarrel with us." Ah, dear me, if we

are not prepared to bear a little of that sort of reproach! Even if reproof of sin must bring unkindness in return, we must not withhold that reproof, but must administer it with all the more prayerfulness and kindness! It must be given lest, as it was with Eli, a curse shall come upon our house because our sons made themselves vile and we restrained them not.

And, dear Friends, there is one other thing that any steward may do and, thereby, spoil his stewardship. That is, prove unfaithful *by forgetting that his Lord will soon come.* He may come before we begin our next piece of work. He may come while we are in the middle of it, or He may come just as we are closing it and, may then and there require an account at our hands! Oh, how earnestly we should live if we were sure that Christ would come tonight! What family prayer you would have tonight if you knew that before the morning dawned, Christ would come! Some of you, perhaps, would want to give something extra to His cause, if you knew that it would be the last opportunity you would have of doing so. Some of you would go and wake your children up and talk to them about Christ if you knew that He would come before the morning light.

There is a great deal left undone by most of us—we are not all like Mr. Whitefield, who could say when he went to bed, "I have not left even a pair of gloves out of their place. If I were to die tonight, everything is right." It is a beautiful thing to live, so, and that is how God's stewards should live! "Ready, yes, ready," to live or to die, to go on or to leave off, to stop here or to go to Heaven—whichever the Master appoints! This is good stewardship. But if we forget that He will come, we shall get into a loose and slovenly way of acting—and that will be to our own discredit and to our Master's dishonor.

IV. Now, finally, WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP?

Supposing we are good stewards, what will the result be? *A reward from our Master's own lips.* In the Day of Account He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Now, after that, you do not need a crown, do you? You do not need any ruling over many cities! You will have all that, but I think that this utterance of our Master is quite enough for any steward of His, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Oh, if He should ever say that to us, there is enough in it to make a whole eternity of bliss!

But suppose that, at the last, we are found unfaithful, what will the result be? Punishment from the Lord's own hand! If it is so, that we have never washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. If it is so that our hearts have never been renewed by Divine Grace. If it is so that we have never been saved from our sin and, consequently, have never been saved from our unfaithfulness—if it should turn out that we have never been saved from living to ourselves, never been saved so as to live honestly and faithfully to God—then what will the result be? I mean, for you who profess to be Christians? Here are our Lord's words. I am not going to enlarge on them any more than I did on the other words—"The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers"—as if that was the

worst punishment that could be meted out to him! God grant that none of us may ever have that portion!

But oh, you who are unbelievers—do you not see that *your* portion is that which God will appoint to these who are unfaithful and only worthy of condemnation? What is your *portion*? It is something truly terrible, for it will be that which God appoints as a *punishment* for the worst of sinners, the treacherous and the unfaithful! O unbelievers, I would not be in your place five minutes for all the world! As the Lord lives, there is but a step between you and Hell! Only a breath and you may be gone. If I were in your place, I would be afraid to eat a morsel of bread, tonight, lest a crumb should go the wrong way and, by causing my death, should land me in everlasting misery! One might be afraid to shut his eyes, tonight, as an unbeliever, lest, as he closed them on earth, he shut them forever to all light and hope, world without end—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross
And find salvation there."

Oh, fly to Jesus at once, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." God help you to trust to Christ, tonight, and to go out of this Tabernacle saved men and saved women, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:35 -48.

Verses 35-37. *Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* This is a wonderful passage. Christ has already had one turn as a Servitor. He was Master and Lord, yet He washed His disciples' feet. But He says that if we are watchful and faithful, if we truly serve Him, the day shall come when, in all His robes of Glory, He shall gird Himself and serve us.

38-40. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into. Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not.* This is a warning to Christ's own people, but it is still more a warning to those who do *not* know Him. Suppose He were to come tonight—where would you be, you who have, up to now, lived as if you were your own masters and were by no means the servants of Christ? Take heed unto yourselves, for you know not when your Lord shall come!

41-44. *Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speak, then, this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has.* What rewards Christ has in store for His people! If we will but be His servants, now, and the servants of our Brothers and Sisters, He will make us rulers over all that He has! I cannot attempt to explain all that these words mean, but I bless the Lord that they are absolutely true!

45, 46. *But and if that servant says in his heart, My master delays his coming; and shall begin to beat the male and female servants and to eat and drink, and to be drunk; the master of that servant will come on a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* Again let me say that I cannot attempt to explain all that these words mean, but, oh, what will be the horror, the terror, of the punishment which will fall upon the unfaithful steward, the minister who is untrue to his holy calling, the professor who says that he is a child of God and a steward of Christ, and yet is unfaithful to his trust? I will read our Lord's words again. You know how we are sometimes accused of saying things too dreadful about the wrath of God in the world to come, but, Beloved, we never say anything dreadful enough! If you will carefully examine the Word of God, you will find there expressions such as even Dante or the mediaeval preachers, with all the horrors they depicted, never surpassed! We cannot exaggerate the awful depth of meaning which we find in the words of the loving Christ, Himself! Let me read this verse again—"The master of that servant will come on a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

47, 48. *And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and did not prepare himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Judge you, then, Brothers and Sisters, how much of ability and talent your Lord has entrusted to you—and be not content to have rendered Him *some* service—but look for proportionate service and humble yourselves in His Presence if your service is not in proportion to the opportunities entrusted to you! Who among us can refrain from humbling himself before God when he thinks of this?

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 LORD'S KNOWLEDGE, OUR SAFEGUARD
NO. 2441

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 1, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 30, 1887.

"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished."
2 Peter 2:9.

THERE are very narrow limits to our knowledge. There is a great breadth to our *conceit*, but the things that we really know are very few, after all. He who is wisest will be the first to confess his own ignorance. Our faith in the superior knowledge of God is a great source of comfort to us. That He knows everything is a sort of Omnipresent covering to our naked ignorance. Though we know not as yet, we rejoice that He knows, and it is better that He should know than that we should know. Knowledge is safer in the hands of God than it would be in our hands. Only the Infinite God is to be trusted with infinite knowledge!

The first words of our text, "The Lord knows," often come as a comfort to my own mind. The text says, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." This is only one of the many things which the Lord knows. For instance, sometimes we meet with perplexing doctrines—perhaps we endeavor to effect reconciliation between the Predestination of God and the freedom of human action. It is better not to wade too far into those deep waters, lest we lose ourselves in an abyss! "The Lord knows." There is a reconciling point in His mind as to all the great Truths which He has revealed. One was wishful, the other night, to tell me some great secret which he had discovered, but I was not so wishful to hear it, for I did not think that I should be any holier or any happier if I did hear it! I was just as pleased not to know as I should have been to know the secret. That insatiable craving to know everything draws away the life of men from what ought to be their insatiable craving, namely, to be *like* God, to *know* Him, to *trust* Him, to *love* Him and to *serve* Him.

Sometimes, dear Friends, we come across puzzling prophecies. Some Brothers and Sisters profess to know all about prophecy. I do not, neither am I quite sure that they do. This I know, that you have only to place one set of interpreters of prophecy over against another set and they speedily swallow one another, as Aaron's rod swallowed the rods of the magicians of Egypt! But I am satisfied to feel that "the Lord knows." And He knows how every prophecy will be fulfilled and the exact order in which the prophecies will come to be facts. We may make our prophetic charts if we like, but God will follow His own chart. We may think that we have discovered the clue of the maze in the Apocalypse and in Daniel, but whether we have, or have not, is of no very great consequence! John

and Daniel spoke by the Holy Spirit and their words will all be fulfilled in due time—and the Lord knows all about the whole matter.

The same is the case in reference to the Lord's amazing promises. Many of them are so amazingly bright and grand that we sometimes ask ourselves, "How can all these things be fulfilled?" And possibly, like Abraham, we may have a Divine promise, yet there may come a precept or a Providence which seems to murder the promise and render its fulfillment impossible, as when God said to the Patriarch, "In Isaac shall your seed be called," and then bade him offer up his son in whom the promise was wrapped up! Yet Abraham, although he did not know how the promise would be fulfilled, staggered not because of unbelief, for he felt that *God knew*. God will keep His promises, Brothers and Sisters. We need not try to help Him as she did who sought to secure the blessing for her favorite son by setting him on an evil and mischievous piece of plotting to deceive his aged father.

It is not your work to fulfill God's promises—you will have enough to do to obey His precepts—and you will need His help to enable you to do that! He does not need your help in fulfilling His promises, but you may say with regard to the whole of them, "The Lord knows how to fulfill them and He will fulfill them to the dot of every i and the stroke of every t. Not one good thing that He has promised shall ever fail to be bestowed upon those who put their trust in Him."

The same is the case, also, dear Friends, with regard to afflictive Providences. "I cannot see the wisdom of this trial," says one. "I cannot understand why this trouble has befallen me," says another. Why do you wish to understand? Why do you need to see? We walk by faith, not by sight! I have known what it is to feel a thrill of sacred joy within my soul when my Divine Master has given me a task altogether beyond my strength. I have felt, "If this work had been only half as heavy as it is, I might have attempted it, but now I know that I cannot perform this task in my own strength, so I am cast upon Omnipotence." It is poor work—paddling about on the muddy beach, lifting first one foot and then the other! The grand exercise is to *swim*—and you must swim when you cannot touch the bottom. Sometimes God puts us into an ocean of afflictions where there seems to be no bottom. Our trials are altogether too heavy for us, they quite overwhelm us. Oh, then, what a mercy it is if we have faith enough to trust in God!

If Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been summoned to the common trial by ordeal—well-known among our ancestors—that of walking over red-hot plowshares, they might have hoped, somehow, to pick their way. But when they were "bound in their coats, their hose, their hats and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace"—where there was no possibility of escape unless Jehovah, Himself, entered the furnace with them—well, then, they had a grander arena for the display of faith in God! They had passed from the littleness of human possibility into the grandeurs of Omnipotence—and God was glorified as they walked loose in the midst of the fire having had nothing burnt except their bonds! It is a great gain when any tried or

persecuted child of God has the company of his Heavenly Father even in the midst of the fiery trial to which he is exposed.

It is the same with regard to grievous temptations. Some of the Lord's very dear children are sorely tempted, sometimes by their own thoughts, into which Satan casts the bitterness of his blasphemies. Sometimes by trials at home which they cannot understand, or by afflictions which seem like that wind from the wilderness which smote the four corners of the house where Job's children were feasting. Well now, at such times, when we cannot comprehend our temptations, but seem altogether in a maze, and at a standstill, then let us fall back on these three words, "*The Lord knows*." The infinite breadth of Divine Wisdom comprehends all our needs, all our sorrows, all our feeblenesses, all our trials and temptations! Let this be like an all-surrounding atmosphere to us, breathing which we shall feel our life strengthened and our hearts made glad!

In our text, the Apostle calls attention to one item of God's knowledge. He makes us feel quite safe as to the government of the universe, seeing it is in the hands of the All-Knowing One, the Lord who knows, on the one hand, "how to deliver the godly out of temptations" and, on the other hand, how "to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished."

I. In considering these words, I shall ask you, first, to think of THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO CHARACTER. This may not appear on the surface of the text, but it is evidently implied, for the Lord would not know how to deliver the godly if He did not know *who* were godly and He would not know how to reserve the unjust unto the future judgment if He did not know who were unjust! Reflect, then, for a few moments, upon the Truth of God that *the Lord knows the godly*. Sometimes they come under trials and temptations so that they are not known to others. Their former friends and their kindred stand aloof from them, as Job's friends and kindred did from him. The Patriarch was so sorely smitten and wounded that his three friends concluded he must be a hypocrite. He "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil," a very favorite of Heaven, yet his friends did not know him as one of the godly because of the great trials which had befallen him.

Yes, and sometimes, because of imperfections, others may not know us to be godly. It is a pity that it should be so, but there are times when sin fiercely assails the Believer and he is sorely put to it. He has to confess that he gives cause to others to stand in doubt of him. Well, Beloved, when others do not know you to be godly, the Lord knows! "The Lord knows them that are His." There have been secret passages between you and God which nobody else can ever know. He perceives your sincerity in the midst of your infirmity and, though He will chasten you for your sin, He still knows that you believe in Him. You may, like Samson, lose your eyes and be shorn of your strength. I pray that you may not fall so low as that, but even if you do, remember that it is written of the blinded Nazarite, "howbeit the hair of his head began to grow, again," and the Lord gave him back his former strength, for, notwithstanding all his folly and his sin, he was a Believer in Jehovah! He had a firm, childlike faith

in the Most High, and in the power of that faith he did great exploits and the Lord, even in Samson's death-struggle, acknowledged him as His servant and avenged him of his adversaries.

Do not let us get into such a condition that others may justifiably doubt us, but if they *maliciously* doubt us—if without cause they cast out our name as evil, if they slander us and invent fictions and falsehoods to injure our character—let us come back to this, which is implied, if not stated, in our text, "The Lord knows the godly."

It may sometimes come as a great comfort to us that the Lord knows the godly when they do not know themselves. I have heard some of God's people speak as though this were not possible, but I boldly assert it from my own observation of hundreds of those who truly love the Lord. We may sometimes be so beset with temptations and our spirit may so sink within us that we may have to stand in doubt as to our own salvation and say, "Am I really the Lord's, or am I not?" There are times when we have to hear the question from our own conscience—and why should we not hear it from our own conscience, since Peter heard it from his Master's own lips, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" I would like to say to you, with the poet Cowper—

"Come, then—a still small whisper in your ear—
He has no hope who never had a fear
And He who never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."

It is not an ill thing to go and search to the very foundations to see whether there is peace between God and your soul or not! Some of the best of the Lord's servants have had to go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, wherein the voice of the evil spirit has been louder in their ears than the whisper of their own faith—and they have had to stand still in utter bewilderment! They could not get *their* sword out of its sheath, or, if they could, they were unable to use it, for it seemed as if the enemy could not be touched by their sword. The only weapon they could handle was the weapon of all-prayer, as they cried out in their anguish, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" Now remember, when you do not know yourself to be godly, God knows! Here is the comfort for our hearts, "The Lord knows the godly." He knows both them and their ways—but the way of the *ungodly* shall perish.

As this is true about the godly, so is it most solemnly certain concerning the ungodly. *The Lord knows the unjust.* That is to say, despite their loud pretensions of piety, the Lord knows that they are really ungodly. They have joined the Church, they wear the name of Christian, they are even honored among Christian men—but the Lord knows the unjust—no garb of religion can conceal their wickedness, no form of pious speech can hide the insincerity of their hearts! Oh, should there be any such here, may this flash of light go right through them! The Lord knows the unjust, whatever they may pretend to be.

He knows them, also, notwithstanding their great possessions. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree." And many a hollow profession has been gilded over with riches and, because the man was well-to-do, they thought that he must be do-

ing well—two very different things, however. But God can read us through and through. If we climbed to a throne, He would discern the state of our heart even there! And if we had the acclamations of a nation for our devotion and piety, He would discover us, even then, for all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do! Let this not be forgotten by any of us! Let us not try to deceive the Lord, but let everything be open and above-board before Him. There should be in us all the most strict truthfulness—I am afraid that there is a tinge of hypocrisy even in the most gracious. May God take it away from us and let us walk in the Light of God as He is in the light, while the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, still cleanses us from all sin, for we shall still need it!

II. Now let us come to the very marrow of the text, which is this—THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE GODLY. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

Notice their name—"the godly"—that is, the people who know God. He is no dream of fancy to them—they *know* Him. He is the most real of all existences to them. Knowing Him, they fear Him. They have learned to fear and tremble before the Most High. It was a name of scorn which they gave to the Society of Friends when they called them, "Quakers." But, after all, it was a right thing for them, like Moses, to exceedingly fear and quake in the Presence of the Most High God. The godly also *trust* God. To them, God is the pillar of their confidence, the brightness of their life, the life of their light, the light of their delight! They rest on Him, as on the Rock of Ages, and they rest nowhere else. These godly ones also *love* God—their heart goes out towards Him. He is their Joy. He is their Companion, their Friend. He is All in All to them. The Lord knows these godly ones and He makes them to know Him. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

Well, it is certain that these godly ones will have to suffer temptation. Gold is tried in the furnace. Good things are tested and proved—and godly men are full often tempted and afflicted and tried. They shall, very few of them, get to Heaven without passing through the trying waters and testing fires, else to them the promise would not be true, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fires, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." The Lord knows all about them and their trials! And especially, according to our text, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." Let me make a few observations upon that Truth of God.

The first is this—*His knowledge answers much better for them than their own would do.* They do not know how they will be delivered out of temptations. Sometimes they make a guess and so make a mistake—and then they are disappointed. They would be far wiser if they left knowledge to the Most High and kept to their own sphere, which is that of trusting, believing and knowing that the Lord knows! One says of Adam that he knew a great deal and it was a pity that he did not know one thing more, namely, that he knew enough, for had he known that he knew enough, he would not have eaten of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good

and Evil! You know enough when you believe. If you know nothing except how you can put you hand into the hand of God, you may go boldly on with a surer tread than the best-sighted man ever knew by his own wisdom alone! "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Better that the knowledge be with the Lord, your Head, than in your own head, for you are not the Lord! "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." It is almost a cant expression among the ungodly—"The Lord knows." Oh, but let it be a very solemn expression among us, "The Lord knows" and, blessed be His name, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations!"

In the next place, *His knowledge of their case is perfect.* He knew the temptation before it came! Before *He appointed it*, He weighed it in His unerring scales—not in the big scale of the coal merchant, but in the delicate scales of the chemist who measures every tiny grain and has a scale that will turn with the weight of a single hair! If God appoints me 10 afflictions, the devil, himself, cannot make 11 of them! If the Lord shall put half an ounce of a bitter ingredient into your cup, all the devils in Hell cannot make an ounce of it! God knows your affliction before it comes to you and He knows it when it comes to you. When Israel was in Egypt, the Lord knew their afflictions. Well said David, "You have known my soul in adversities." The Lord knows just where the trial touches and pinches us, how we grieve under it, how far it has gone and how far it must not go. The Lord knows our afflictions with a perfect knowledge before they come—and when they come—and He also knows all about them when they go. I bless His name that He can foresee the effect of trial upon His children! He knows what Grace it will brighten. He knows what shams it will destroy. He knows what it will teach us and He knows what it will make us unlearn, which we thought we needed to know. He knows all about us from beginning to end and, consequently, His knowledge of our temptations is absolutely perfect—and we may be content and rest in perfect peace. "He knows the way that I take."

And this is true *in every case of every child of God.* "The Lord knows how to deliver"—not merely some one godly man, or some 20 godly men, but "the godly" as a whole, all of them! Dear Friend, to put it very personally, the Lord knows how to deliver you out of your present temptation. But do not put your hand to sin in order to deliver yourself! That is what Satan will tempt you to do. Lay not the hand of Uzzah upon the Ark of the Lord, much less upon any piece of furniture in your own house! Oh, the temptation there is, sometimes, to indulge in a hasty temper, or to speculate in business, or to keep back a part of the truth, or to pretend to be something which you are not, or to allow a sin to go unreproved because you wish to escape reproach or to avoid censorious judgments! No, the Lord knows how to deliver you, and if He does not deliver you, then say with those three holy children whom I mentioned a few minutes ago, "If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." Do not at-

tempt to supplement the wisdom of God with your insanity, for it is nothing better than insanity when you fancy that you can ever profit by wrongdoing!

God's knowledge, as revealed to us in this verse, gives us a very comfortable thought. If the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, then, depend upon it, *there is a way of deliverance out of every temptation*. The Lord does *not* know what does *not* exist. If He knows that there is a way of deliverance, then there is a way of deliverance, and there is a way of escape for you! You do not see it—do not ask or wish to see it. Ah, those eyes of ours—would God that they were put out! I was going to say we see a great deal too much, Brothers and Sisters, or we think we do. And because we say we see, we go blindly on, stumbling and blundering every foot of the way! It is for God to see and it is for us to believe and to trust in Him! There is a way of deliverance and it will be proved before long that there is a way of deliverance for *you*. If you believe it, you shall see it. God knows how to deliver—that means that there is a way of deliverance!

But it means more. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly *in the way most profitable for themselves*. We have invented various ways of deliverance, but God has not used them. And then we have found out another way, but He has not acknowledged that. And we have sought another way, but He would not have that. No, He knows how to deliver, so why do you come in with your inventions? Verily, I shall apply that text even to you, "God has made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions"—even inventions for escaping from trouble and trial! But the Lord knows which is the best way for their deliverance. He will bring you out of Egypt, but not in the way you thought, that you should flee away all of a sudden and escape by stealth. No, no—this is how He will deliver you, even as He delivered Israel of old—"He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." He will bring you out in a profitable way and a right way!

And, best of all, He will bring you out *in the way which will be most glorifying to Himself*. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, He led His people out of Egypt, shattering all the might and pomp of the proudest monarch of the day! And the emancipated nation sang unto the Lord a new song as they took their timbrels and danced before Him who had triumphed gloriously over their cruel oppressor. That is what you, also, shall yet do. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations" in the way that is most glorious to Himself. God's children ought to think less of what is done, at any time, than of the Glory that God gets out of it. We sometimes want to see a great work, but a great work may not glorify God. If there is a little, obscure, unknown work—and to human eyes it remains almost a secret—if it glorifies God, it is to be preferred to the most gigantic wave of supposed revival that, after all, would leave behind it the names of men, but the name of God would be forgotten! In all things let God be glorified! Oh, that we would always aim at this objective! The salvation of men is a grand aim, but it must always be

in subordination to the Glory of the Lord, that His arm may be revealed and that all flesh may see it together. Oh, that God might be glorified! Be this our prayer in our trials and in coming out of our trials, "Father, glorify Your name."

III. Now, I must say a few solemn and weighty words upon THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE UNJUST—"and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished."

Observe that Peter does not say, "the ungodly." He is not dealing with their inward character so much as with their *outward conduct*. They are "unjust." Ungodliness is unrighteousness and, sooner or later, the ungodly are seen to be unjust.

Ungodly men are legally unjust—they have broken God's Law and, therefore, they are not justified in His sight. Worse than that, they are evangelically unjust, for they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, they have not His justifying righteousness to cover them. And then they are *practically* unjust, for their life is an injustice to God and to men. They have not received the sanctifying power of the Spirit to make them just in their daily lives.

God knows how to deal with these people. Let me read Peter's words, again, "The Lord knows how to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished." You hear their blasphemies. You mark their infamies and your indignation burns against them—but the Lord knows how to deal with them. *He knows how to reserve them under restraints*. He acts like a magistrate who commits a prisoner for trial at the Great Assize. That is what God has done with some of you ungodly ones—you are committed for trial at the Day of Judgment. The Lord lets you live, but you are only out on bail and you will soon have to appear before the great Judge of Heaven and earth.

According to the Revised Version, and I think that translation is correct, *the punishment has already begun*. The Lord knows how to go, on even, now punishing the ungodly! That unrest of theirs, those fears, the trembling—all show that God is dealing with them. They swell themselves out very big, they laugh with loud laughter, they deny the Truth of God and they scoff at Christ—but, believe me, dear Friends, you need not wish to be like they are—no, not even like the healthiest, the wealthiest, the proudest and the greatest of them! The Lord knows how, even now, to smite them, and He does smite them! The life of an ungodly man, at its best, is a horrible life. I would sooner be God's dog than the devil's darling! It is better to be the most weeping Jeremiah than the most boastful Pharaoh. The day will come when the ungodly will, themselves, see it to be so—and the proudest tyrant will envy the lowest man or woman who crept humbly to the Mercy Seat and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

The Lord knows how to deal with the unjust even now and *He will know how to deal with them by-and-by*. O Sirs, these are no trifling matters of which I am speaking! The unjust may be in the fullness of their strength, but the Lord can bring them down to lie on a sickbed. Even there they may defy God, but He knows how to stop their impious

mouths. "Ah," He says—and that is an awful text—"Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies," as if they vexed and plagued His Holy Spirit and, at last He says, "I will be rid of them. They shall not trouble Me any longer. I will ease Me of My adversaries." Then He sends the "reaper, whose name is Death." I think that I meet him now, swinging his sharp sickle, and I say to him, "Whither away, O Death? What are you about to do? Will you dare destroy that scarlet poppy blazing in the midst of the growing corn?" "Ah," he says, "one touch of my sickle will bring it down." "And that blue flower, yonder, in all its splendid majesty of beauty?" "Ah," he says, "I will lay that low with all the common grasses of the field."

The Lord knows how to deal with the unjust *in the next world as well as in this*. Oh, that dreadful thought! Trouble not yourselves about it, except to "flee from the wrath to come!" Raise no perplexing questions in your mind. The Lord knows how to deal with the unjust in the world to come and that dealing shall be according to the strictest rule of justice. The Judge of all the earth shall do right—men shall not be able to accuse Him of injustice! He will deal with them as the God who cannot err. They are in His hands and, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Do not believe those who tell you that it is not. They are the servants of the devil—be they who they may—who seek to delude your souls upon this matter! I beseech you, escape for your lives! Look not behind you, stay not in all the plain but escape to the Cross of Christ, for there, and there, only, is there salvation for the unrighteous! Oh, seek it now, for Jesus' sake!

I close with an illustration of the text which I feel almost certain was in the mind of Peter when he wrote these words, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished." Turn to the 12th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where you have the record of Peter lying asleep in the prison, watched by soldiers, and yet at dead of night the angel of the Lord came into the prison, smote Peter on the side, bade him bind on his sandals, gird himself and follow him. Peter went through all the doors of the prison till he came to the great iron gate and that opened of its own accord! And there stood Peter, out in the street, in answer to the prayers made at the Prayer Meeting at Mrs. Mark's house, when the Christians in Jerusalem were gathered that night to pray for him. This miracle proves that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trial!

Read the rest of the chapter, please, for that takes in the other half of my text. Herod sat upon his throne of state and all the people were paying him homage. And when he made an oration from his golden throne, they shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." That same God, who had delivered Peter, knew how to lay hold of Herod, for we are told that immediately the angel of the Lord smote him and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost! The first is a brilliant deed of infinitely wise Grace, the next is an astounding deed of n infinitely wise Justice! It is not necessary that you go to the gallows to meet your doom—a few worms can destroy you! It is not necessary that you be killed in a great

railway accident, or that there be a collision at sea, or that you fall on the field of battle! Herod was eaten of worms. A grape-stone has, before now, choked and killed a man. A draught of water has been poisonous to another. A little gas, that was almost impalpable, has laid another in his grave. There is not one of you ungodly ones who can escape if God shall say to His angels, "Smite that man while he sits in his pew. He has resisted My mercy and rejected My love. He will not come to Christ." You, too, may be eaten of worms before another Sunday comes! God grant that you may not meet such a fate, but may you learn the lesson of this text and feel the force and power of it in your own souls, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:16-21; 2:1-10.

1 Peter 1:16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.* There is need in these perilous times to come back to such an elementary Truth as this. The Truths taught us in God's Word are not fables, myths, or merely parables, but they are matters of actual fact. The Apostles were eyewitnesses of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"—"eyewitnesses of His majesty." We receive these Truths of God without the slightest question and base our faith upon them. We would be troubled, indeed, if we had any doubts whatever about these great foundation facts of our holy religion.

17, 18. *For He received from God the Father honor and Glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.* They were not deceived—neither Peter, nor James, nor John. There was "such a voice" from God, Himself, which they literally heard. It was the Father bearing approving witness to the Person and work of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy.* Surely nothing could be more sure than the evidence presented to the Apostles in the holy mount! Yet Peter thus writes to express his utmost confidence in the Word of God. Surer than the light he saw, which dazzled him. Surer than the voice he heard which he never failed to remember and to which he always bore unfaltering witness! Surer, even, than these things is that Divine Book which is still preserved to us—"We have also a more sure word of prophecy."

19. *Whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day star arises in your hearts.* You already have the assurance of the Word, itself—you must build upon that and upon that, alone—but you shall have added to that a, "day dawns," and a, "day star," in your own hearts. We have the witness within us now—"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." And those things which we have re-

ceived by faith we now have proven to be true by their effect upon our own souls! We know the Light of God, now, because we walk in it! We know it to be the Light of God for it has enlightened us.

20, 21. *Knowing this, first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* How we rejoice in this fact! We shall never give it up. It is a disbelief of Inspiration which lies at the bottom of all the modern theories—but with this disbelief we have not the slightest fellowship! In our inmost souls we believe that "holy men of God spoke as they were moved (or, "borne along"), by the Holy Spirit." They spoke not for their own age, alone, neither were the prophecies given to a few persons so as to belong privately to them—but the whole Inspired Scripture stands fast for all the faithful and is the Truth of God to us, today, even as it was to those to whom it was first spoken!

1 Peter 2:1. *But there were false prophets also among the people.* How true that still is! Be not startled, Brothers and Sisters, as though some strange thing had happened to us in this generation! It was always so and so it will continue. If there are true Prophets, there will also be false prophets. And if there is the Spirit of God, there will be the spirit of evil! And often, in proportion as the everlasting Truth of God is full of power, the everlasting lie will be full of power, too, and will strive mightily against it. That same sun and shower which shall make yonder wheat to grow, will, at the same time, cause the thorns to spring up! And perhaps for a time they may threaten to choke the wheat until, at last, the wheat will choke the thistles. "There were false prophets also among the people."

1. *Even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies.* They always try to do their hateful work privately and then they ask, "What is all this fuss about? We have not departed from the truth, we are as sound in the faith as any of you are," when they know, traitors that they are, that they are undermining the foundations and trying to take away the very cornerstone of the faith! These "false teachers" would deceive the very elect of God if it were possible, but they are not easily deceived, for God has given them a discerning mind by which they "try the spirits whether they are of God." The Lord Jesus said of His sheep, "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." Sheep though they are, they have discernment enough to know their shepherd—and the godly soon detect false teachers who privily "bring in damnable heresies,"

1, 2. *Even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be spoken of evilly.* They say, "It is narrow; it is old-fashioned; it is not in accordance with the spirit of the age." I know not what else they say, but, for all that they say, it still remains "the way of truth."

3, 4. *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and*

their damnation slumbers not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement. "If God spared not the angels that sinned," He will not spare *any who sin*, however high their position may be—even though they are the angels of the Churches, He will "cast them down to Hell."

5. *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.* Which some in these days say could not be consistent with the acts of a God of Love. Their imaginary deity, from whom they have taken away every glorious attribute of holiness and justice, would not have done this! But the God that judges righteously must and will punish sin, as He always has done and, "this God is our God forever and ever," even the God who is "a consuming fire."

6-8. *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds).* I love to see in God's people a holy horror of the sin which surrounds them. In several of the prayers in which we joined before we came upstairs to this service, there were many tears and cries over the wickedness of our streets—the impurity and the drunkenness which defile so many all around us. Alas! Alas! Men seem bent on horrible iniquity and it looks as if London, this great modern Babylon, will repeat the story of the cities of the plain! Well may we pray, "O Lord, have mercy upon the people!"

9. *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.* As He delivered Lot—

9, 10. *And to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise government.* We have far too many, nowadays, of both these sorts of sinners, and of the two sorts joined in one—"them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government."

10. *Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.* There let us cease our reading and turn to another holy song in which we will praise our God, whose Grace has made us to differ from the ungodly by whom we are surrounded.

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.

"MY BELOVED IS MINE"
NO. 2442

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 8, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1887.

"My beloved is mine, and I am His."
Song of Solomon 2:16.

THIS is a short verse from the Song of Songs and I do not hesitate to say that it is the soul and heart of that Divine composition. The bride dressed in her richest poesy wears no jewel more precious than this diamond of full assured possession! There is poetry here which none of the sons of music can excel. It is the heart's minstrelsy at its very best. This little sonnet might be sung in Heaven and the golden harps would be well employed if every string went with the accompaniment. How I wish you could, each one, sing it now with a clear sweet voice!—

"Now I my best Beloved's am,
And He is mine."

Alas, many of the Lord's own chosen and called ones are afraid to take up this chorus and join with us! I do not condemn them, but I am eager to comfort them. What would they give?—rather, what would they *not* give—if they could but say, "Christ is mine"? Yet they hesitate. The desire is strong, but the doubt is killing and they dare not sing with us. It seems too good, too great, too glorious a claim to come from their lips! They sometimes hope, but they as often fear. They make a dash for it, now and then, and trust that Christ is theirs—and then they subside into their former doubting. They are humble, modest, retiring—but I fear I must add—they are, at least in a measure, unbelieving!

I want to lead these true hearts up to the table that they may feast upon the dainties provided for faith. I know that even now, as they hear the text, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," they are saying, "Happy people that can speak thus, but I cannot. I am afraid it would be presumption and, perhaps, hypocrisy, on my part, if I were to use such language." And yet, dear Heart, it is very possible that you have a perfect right to put in your claim—yes, and that you ought to be among the most confident and the most fully assured! What a pity it is that you should be losing so much joy! Yet some of the most true children of God walk in darkness at times and we have provision made for them under the circumstances—"Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Oh, that I might

be the means, by His Grace, of enabling some of you to trust more bravely and hold to your Lord in the darkness—for soon that darkness would be over!

Did I hear one mourn his faults and lament his temptations? This need not be a hindrance! She who first sang this priceless stanza was, herself, warring against enemies. Read the previous verse—"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." Instead of letting go her Lord to hunt the foxes, she clung the more to Him and joined Him with herself in the effort to take them. "Foxes or no foxes," she says, "my Beloved is mine." Jesus belongs to us in our imperfect condition—while yet we are beset with many mischievous and cunning foes! The Song before us is found in our own Bible, which is a Book to be used on earth rather than in Heaven. While yet the foxes prowl around us we may sing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

Indeed, it is by strength derived from such a cheering confidence that we are enabled to kill these foxes and preserve the tender clusters of grapes till they are ripe for our Lord. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us not do ourselves the serious hurt of refusing the greatest of blessings for reasons which are not valid! Let us mourn our faults, but let us not, therefore, forego our privileges! I will not let my Lord go because I see a fox. No, rather, I will cling to Him the more closely. If that fox should hurt my vine, yet I have a better Vine in my Lord, and one which no fox can touch! Away, you beasts of the field—you sins, doubts and fears—for my heart dares to sing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

I feel that I am a bearer of a tenfold portion to the Benjamin of the family. Joseph—I mean, Jesus—has sent it and I am eager to deliver it fresh from His dear hands! O trembling Believer, it is all for you! Receive it and eat abundantly thereof. I am under the impression that my Master has bid me remember that there is a Ruth here who only desires to glean—and she trembles while she gathers a few scanty ears. She has not the courage to take a sheaf, herself, but my Lord has said, "Let fall handfuls on purpose for her." And I would try to do so, but I pray that timid Ruth may have courage enough to take up what I shall gladly let fall for her, for the good Boaz, in whose field I serve, has his eyes upon her and means more kindness to her than I can tell!

What I have to do, tonight, is to mention a few things which may help some timid one to say, "My Beloved is mine," and then to do the same with regard to the second sentence in the text, "I am His."

You ask, perhaps, "May I say, 'My Beloved is *mine*?'" You know who that Beloved is. I have no need to tell you that. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely! You believe that it is He who is the ever-blessed Son of God, who became Man for our sake and, as the God-Man, made atonement for our sin and, having died, has risen from the dead and gone into His Father's within the veil where He ever makes intercession for us. It is that Christ who is the Light of Heaven, the Joy of everlasting bliss, the Adored of angels! It certainly does seem a great

thing to call Him mine, to think that He should ever be mine, and that all He is, and all He has, and all He says, and all He does, and all He ever will be, is all mine! When a wife takes a husband to be hers, he becomes all hers, and she reckons that she has no divided possession in him. And it is certainly so with you, dear Heart, if Christ is yours. He is still yours and altogether yours even if it looks as though you were opening your mouth very wide to be able to say it. Some of you were brought up in a school which is full of the Law and you are afraid to say what the Gospel permits you to say—you have not yet dared to avail yourselves of your privileges! Some of God's heirs are often kept in the back kitchen when they have a right to sit in the parlor and to eat of the dainties of their Lord! Some are kept from the joys to which they have a fair claim, so I am going to ask you a few questions to see whether you are one of them.

First, *have you taken hold of Christ by faith*? Faith is the hand with which we grasp the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you believed that Jesus is the Christ and that God has raised Him from the dead? Do you trust yourself wholly to Him? I say, "wholly"—with no other secret confidence. Do you lean your whole weight on Him? He that hangs on two branches, *one* of which is rotten, will go down. You had best trust your whole self with Christ and let Him be the top and bottom of your confidence. If you do that, then He is yours—this faith makes Him yours to your joyful experience! Listen to His own words—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If you believe in Christ, you have Christ to be your everlasting life and you may say, "My Beloved is mine."

I should hope that this is not a very difficult question for you to answer—you are either trusting in Christ or you are not. If you are *not* trusting in Christ, God forbid that I should exhort you to say what would be presumptuous! But if you are resting on Him who lived, loved and died that He might wash us from our sins in His blood—I say, if He is all your salvation and all your desire, then hesitate not to say, "My Beloved is mine." There is no surer claim in the world than the claim of faith! God has given Christ to every believing sinner—be he who he may—God has given Christ to him by a covenant of salt and Christ is his, and shall be his forever! Poor Trembler, if you believe on Him, even *you* may say, "My Beloved is mine."

Let me ask you another helpful question. *Is He truly your Beloved, the Beloved of your soul*? I remember well a dear Christian woman who frequently said to me, "I love Jesus, I know I do. But does He love me?" Her question used to make me smile. "Well," I said, "that is a question that I never put to myself—'If I love Him, does He love me?' No, the question that used to puzzle me was, 'Do I love Him?' When I could once settle *that* point, I was never again the victim of your form of doubt." If you love Christ, Christ loves you for sure, for your love to Christ is nothing more nor less than a beam out of the great sun of His love and the Grace that has created that love in your heart towards Him! If you do, indeed, love

Him, proves that He loves you! Is it not so—"We love Him because He first loved us"? Did love ever get into the heart by any other door than that? I am sure that it never did! So that, if you love Him, you can say, "My Beloved is mine."

There are many who may love on earth and never obtain the object of their affection. But if you love Christ, raise no question about His love to you! He is yours and you are His! That test may help someone who, perhaps, is standing trembling behind the door, full of blushes and afraid to come in among God's people. To you, poor timid Soul, we say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why do you stand outside? If you love Him, you are welcome to all He has."

Next, I would help you with a third question. *Is Jesus dear to you above all your possessions*? Perhaps you have a great deal of this world's goods. Do you set small store by all that you have as compared with Jesus? Could you see it all burn away, or melt away, or be stolen, rather than lose Christ? If you can say, "Yes," to that question, then He is yours. Perhaps you have very little—a few earthly comforts, a narrow room and a scant pittance to live upon—but would you sooner have Christ than all the riches of the world, or would you be willing to sell Christ in order to rise in the world? Would you sell Him that you might be made rich, great and famous? You who are sick—which would you sooner have, your sickness and Christ, or go without Christ to be made healthy and strong? According to your answer to these enquiries will be my answer to the other questions, "Are you Christ's and is Christ yours?" I hope that many of you can say, "O Sir, we would give all that we have, we would suffer all that might be suffered, we would part with the very light and our eyes, too, if we could but be sure that we might, each one, truly say, 'My Beloved is mine.'" Well, if you love Christ beyond all earthly things, rest assured that He is yours!

Further, *do you love Him beyond all earthly companions*? Could you part with your dearest ones for His sake? Say, are you sure of this? Oh, then, He is assuredly yours! Do you love Him beyond all earthly objects? Yes, beyond the desire of learning, or honor, or position, or comfort—would you let all go for His dear sake? Many of His saints have had to do it and they have done it very cheerfully, and said with the Apostle, "Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." Can you go that length? If you can, then surely He is yours!

Let me further help you by another question. *Is Jesus so fully your hope and your trust that you have no other*? I have often led persons into liberty through that question. They have said, "I am afraid that I do not trust Christ." I have then asked, "Well, what *do* you trust? Every man has a reliance of some sort—what are *you* trusting?" When I have pressed them closely, they have said, "Oh, we have no other trust! God

forbid that we ever should have!" When I have mentioned their good works, they have said, "Good works? Why, we would be foolish, indeed, to talk of them!" When I have mentioned trusting in a priest, or in sacraments, they have scorned the thought—it has been loathsome to them. Then I have said, "If you have no other trust but Christ, and you are sure that you have a trust *somewhere*, then your trust is in Christ, and though you may question it, and doubt it, yet if you do so trust in Him as to trust nowhere else, He is yours and you are His."

There is many a good and true Believer who, nevertheless, is afraid that he is not a Believer. When you are once on board ship, even if the vessel is tossed to and fro and you, yourself, are ill, perhaps sadly seasick, yet as long as that ship does not go down, you will not go down—for your safety now does not depend upon your health and strength, but upon the ship into which you have entered! So, if you have fled to Christ away from everything else, then, though you may sigh, and cry, and fear, and tremble—for all of which I am sorry, for I would have every man on board ship to be well and strong and able to handle the ropes—still, if you cannot touch a rope, and if you cannot even eat your meals in your cabin, yet, if you are aboard the ship, and if that ship gets safe to land, so will you! Therefore, be of good cheer! O poor Heart, if you are clean divorced from every confidence but Christ, then I believe that you are married to Christ, notwithstanding that you tremble, sometimes, and ask whether it is so or not! Let that thought help you.

I would further help you in this way. *If Christ is yours, your thoughts go after Him*. You cannot say that you love a person if you never think of him. You could not, I am sure, let another person fill your heart as Christ must fill His people's hearts and yet never let that person occupy your thoughts. He to whom Christ belongs often thinks of Him. "Well," says one, "I am so busy during the day that, often, my mind is taken up with my business and I do not think of Christ." Do you know where those crows live that are feeding on that plowed field? They are going up and down the furrows, picking up all the worms they can find. And as you look at them, you cannot tell where their home is, can you? No, but wait till evening, when the day's feeding is over—then you will see which way the crows fly and you will find out where their nests are! Do you see how quickly they are winging their way to yonder rookery?

So is it with us—while we are busy in the world, picking up the worms, as it were, we have to think about those things. We cannot do our business properly without our thoughts going that way. But when the business is over, when the evening comes—which way do you go then? When you have an opportunity for thought, when your mind is going to its resting place—which way do your thoughts fly? That shall be the true test! And if, when your thoughts are set free, they fly away to Jesus, rest assured that He is yours! That thought may help some of you poor trembling ones.

We read of the Apostles, "Being let go, they went to their own company." Just so. I heard a working man who was expounding that chapter very well. He said, "If some fellows were put in prison and they were let out, they would go to the first public house they see, for that is where they would find their company. Just so—"birds of a feather flock together." Now when you are let go, when your mind gets out of the prison of your daily business, do you go to the world for your pleasure? Do you go to carnal things for your mirth, or do you fly to Christ? If you can answer, "My thoughts go naturally to Christ," then you can truly say, "My Beloved is mine."

Again, do you do more than this? *Do you long for Christ's company*? If, "my Beloved" is, indeed, mine, I shall want to see Him! I shall want to speak with Him. I shall want Him to abide with me. How is it with you? There is a great deal of religion in the world which only consists of shells, or husks—the kernels are not there at all. A man goes upstairs and kneels down for a quarter of an hour and he says that he is praying, yet possibly he has not really prayed at all. Another opens his Bible and he reads a chapter and he says that he has been studying the Scriptures. Perhaps it has been a mere mechanical act and there has been no heart and soul in it. John Bradford, the famous martyr, used to say, "I have made a point of this, that I will never go from a duty till I have had communion with Christ in it." And, when he prayed, he prayed till he did really pray. When he praised, he praised till he did truly praise. If he was bowing in humiliation before God, he humbled himself till he was actually humbled. If he was seeking communion with Christ, he would not go away with the pleasure of merely having *sought*, but he kept on seeking until he *found*, for he felt that he had done nothing aright till he had come into communion with God and into touch with Christ.

And, once more, *if your Beloved is yours, you will acknowledge it to be so*. Coming into this Tabernacle, or going down to the Communion Table, or gathering round the family altar—what is *all that* if Christ is *not* there? It should be with you as it is with a wife whose husband is far away across the sea. "Oh," she cries, "that I could hear the music of his footsteps! The rooms seem all empty now that he is away. There is his portrait on the wall, but it only makes me sigh the more for my Beloved. The very dog, as he comes in, seems to know that his master is away and he makes me think of him."

Is it so with you in regard to Christ? In every duty do you sigh for Him and long for Him? Holy Bernard was known to say and I believe that he could truly say it (it was in Latin, but I will give you the English of it), "O my Jesus, I never went from You without You!" He meant that he never left his knees and left Christ behind him. He never went out of the house of God and left Christ behind him. But he went through the outward act of devotion with a consciousness of the Presence of Christ. Now, if this is your habit—to keep up or to labor to keep up continued communion with

Christ, and if you are longing for more and more of that communion—then, dear Friends, you are His, and He is yours!

Further, let me help you with a still closer question. *Have you ever enjoyed that communion with Christ*? Did you ever speak with Him? Have you ever heard His voice? I think I see you turning over the leaves of your diary! I hope you have not to go far back to read the record of your fellowship with your Lord. I hope that this morning was one instance of it and that this evening may be another! But are there not some special days, red-letter days, in your history? I recollect that Rutherford sent this message to one of his friends who was in great sorrow, "Tell him to remember Torwood." Nobody knew what was meant except the two who had been to Torwood where they had enjoyed such fellowship with Christ that they could never forget it all their days! That is what David meant when He said, "Therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar." Those were some choice spots that he remembered where the Lord had met with him!

How can Christ be yours if you know nothing about communion with Him? Are you married to Him if He has never shown you His face and you have never heard His voice, and never spoken with Him? But if you have had Christ's company, He has manifested Himself to you as He does not unto the world. He would never have shown you such things as these if you were not His. Ah, have you not, sometimes, crept out of the very dungeon of despair and seen your Lord's blessed face—and in a moment you have been dancing for joy? Have you not lain on the bed of sickness, "weary, and worn, and sad," till His Presence has made the chamber of affliction bright with the light of Heaven? Have you not, sometimes, at the dead of night, been weary in watching for sleep that would not come and your Lord has come to you—and then you have been afraid to go to sleep lest you should lose the joy of His Presence and wake up without Him?

Oh, some of us know what that experience means—when earth has been the vestibule of Heaven and when, even in our sickness and sadness, we have been on the very verge of Jordan—and we have smelt the fragrance of the spices that was wafted by the breath of the Spirit from the golden gardens on the other side of the stream! If you know anything experimentally about this matter, then you may conclude that your Beloved is, indeed, yours!

But supposing that you are not enjoying Christ's Presence, I am going to put another question to you. *Are you cast down when He is away*? If you have grieved His Spirit, are you grieved? If Christ is gone, do you feel as if the sun, itself, had ceased to shine and the candle of your existence had been snuffed out in utter darkness? Do you cry when He is away—

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill"?

Oh, then, He is yours! If you can not bear His absence, He is yours!

Last Thursday night I preached a sermon which was intended to be very searching one, and I hope that it was. It was upon the text, "Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Now see the difficulty of a poor minister! If I preach very comforting sermons, there are sure to be hypocrites who suck them down and say, "How delightful!" But when I preach a soul-searching sermon, some dear child of God, who is as precious to her Lord as gold tried in the furnace, takes everything to herself and begins to be very sorrowful, and to say, "That sharp knife is meant for *me*, for I am not one of the Lord's people!"

Well, after last Thursday night's sermon, a dear woman came to my vestry, broken-hearted, crying and sobbing. I hope that the discourse will be a blessing to her in the long run, but I assure you that I never meant to preach to her at all! I was not aiming at her or at the sort of people to whom she belongs! It was a very different class whom I was addressing. If the preacher says anything about hypocrites, very often the hypocrites will not take it to heart, but the most sincere saint in the congregation very likely says, "Oh, I am afraid that I am a hypocrite!" If you are, you are an odd sort of hypocrite, for I never knew of a hypocrite who was afraid that he was one! He has not Grace enough for that kind of fear, but just goes on in the self-conceit that all is right with him. I, for my part, feel more confidence in the broken-hearted tremblers than I do in the boasters who never have a question about their being all right, but set it down as an undisputed fact that they are in the Covenant of Grace.

O Beloved, I am glad if sometimes you moan like a dove and cry in the bitterness of your spirit, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" It may seem to be a spot on your character, but this spot is the spot of God's children and I am not sorry to see it upon you! If the Prince Immanuel has left the town of Mansoul, then there can be no marriage bells or joyous music there until He comes back. We must invite Him and entreat Him to return! We must clothe ourselves in sackcloth till He comes back! If we do not act thus, then He is not ours. If you *can* do without Christ, you *shall* do without Christ—but if you cannot do without Him, if you cry—

"Give me Christ, or else I die,"

then He shall be yours! Stretch out the hand of faith and take Him, and then say without hesitation, "My Beloved is mine."

I am not going on to the rest of the text, but I want to say just this—if there is any man or woman here (and I know there are many), who can sit down in the pew and quietly say, "Yes, weighing everything the preacher has said, and judging myself as severely as I can, yet I dare take Christ to be mine and to say, 'My Beloved is mine.'" If that is your case, dear Friend, then you shall get confirmatory evidence of this fact by *the witness of the Spirit* within your soul which will very likely come to you in the form of perfect contentment of spirit, perfect rest of heart—

"When I can say, 'My God is mine,'

When I can feel Your glories shine;
I tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great."

"There," says the Believer, "now that my Beloved is mine, I have no other wish or need." Now will he be like Simeon when he took that blessed Baby into his arms. "Lord," he said, "now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word." "Have you nothing more to live for, Simeon?" "No," replies the good old man, "what more can there be?" "Don't you think that if you lived a little longer, you might have a heavy purse of gold in your hands?" "Yes," he answers, "possibly I might, but it would be a cumbrous burden. This dear Child is better than all the gold and silver in the world. If He is mine, I have enough, yes, I have all!" That blessed rest of soul, which comes of a sure possession of Christ, is not to be imitated—but it is greatly to be desired!

I know that some good people, who I believe will be saved, nevertheless do not attain to this sweet rest. They keep on thinking that it is something that they may get when they are very old, or when they are about to die—but they look upon the *full assurance of faith* and the personal grasping of Christ, and saying, "My Beloved is mine," as something very dangerous. I began my Christian life in this happy fashion as a boy 15 years of age. I believed fully and without hesitation in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when I went to see a good Christian woman, I was simpleton enough to tell her that I believed in Christ, that He was mine and that He had saved me. She said to me, "Ah, I don't like such assurance as that." And then she added, "I trust you are believing in Christ—I hope so—but I have never got beyond a hope, or a trust, and I am an old woman."

Bless the old woman, but she was no example for us who know whom we have believed—we are to rise infinitely beyond that groveling kind of life! The man who begins right, and the boy who begins right, and the girl who begins right will begin by saying, "God has said it—'He that believes on Him is not condemned.' I believe on Him, therefore I am not condemned! Christ is mine!" O dear Friends, do not always keep on with that miserable hoping, and hoping, and hopping! Walk on both your feet and get a good firm standing on the Rock of Ages—and say without boasting, but without doubting—"My Beloved is mine!" This will bring you into the condition of the Psalmist when he said, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." David would never have said that if he had not begun the Psalm with, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

If He had begun by saying, "*Perhaps* the Lord is my Shepherd," he would have gone on to say, "Perhaps there may be green pastures, possibly there may be still waters; but as yet my soul is in a dry and thirsty land where is no water and not a blade of grass." Ah, David was not so stupid as that! He had his times of depression, but when he was singing that Psalm, he was in a positive, certain frame of mind! "The Lord is my Shepherd." He used the indicative mood, not the subjunctive or condi-

tional! The Lord help you to do the same! And you may. If Christ is a satisfaction to your spirit, so that your soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, then do not hesitate to say and to emphasize the utterance, "My Beloved is mine." He either is, or He is not—which is it? Do not go to sleep tonight till you know!

If Christ is yours, Heaven is yours! If Christ is not yours, you are neither fit to live, nor fit to die. Remember that awful verse, "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—"let him be accursed, the Lord comes!" Take heed unto yourselves, therefore—if Christ is not yours, you are in terrible poverty! But if Christ is yours, you are eternally rich to all the intents of bliss! Oh, that He might be yours, now, by your stretching out the hand of faith and taking Him to yourself!

"I dare not take Him," says one. Well, you are a strange person! I dare not let Him alone and I challenge you to shape that, "dare," into any other proper form. If He bids you take Him and trust Him, how dare you refuse Him? Take Him, now, and be safe and happy forever! God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 63.

This is said to be, "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah." I suppose, therefore, that it was composed when he fled from Jerusalem because of the cruel treachery of his son, Absalom. He must have been heart-broken, and stricken with the greatest possible sorrow as he fled away with his faithful followers into the wilderness of Judah. But even there he praised his God—and he did not sing to Him with old and stale Psalms, but with a new song! How restful and calm he must have been, in his great sorrow, to sit down, even in the wilderness of Judah, and make a new hymn of praise unto the Lord! How gloriously he begins!

Verse 1. *O God, You are my God.* The Psalmist has no doubt about this great fact! He does not hesitate or falter, but he makes the positive assertion, "O God, You are my El, my mighty God, strong to deliver me." In the 62nd Psalm, he had finished up with the power of God—"God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God." So he begins this new song with the great name, El, which expresses the might and power of God—"O God, You are my El, my mighty God."

1. *Early will I seek You:* People in the wilderness have hard beds to lie on and they sleep fewer hours. David was up in the morning, early, and he began the day with prayer to God—"Early will I seek You." "While the dew is on the grass, the dew of the Spirit shall be upon my soul." He means, also, "I will seek You at once, immediately, now, without delay." But how could he seek the God who was already his God? "You are my God; early will I seek You." Brothers and Sisters, nobody ever seeks an-

other man's God. Till God is *your* God, you will not want to seek Him. But when you have Him, you will seek Him yet more and more!

1. *My soul thirsts for You.* He had a strong passion for God. There is, sometimes, an unbearable, insatiable pang of the body which you cannot forget. And David had an insatiable longing of soul which nothing could make him forget—"My soul thirsts for You."

1. *My flesh longs for You.* Even his flesh, his body—*not* his carnal nature—but his body mastered by his soul, was caused to yield its little help towards the making of this verse—"My flesh longs for You."

1. *In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.* And this world is just like that. To most Christians, the six days of the week take them through the wilderness and the Sabbath brings them to an oasis in the desert, an Elim, a place where there are wells of Living Water! But oh, what longings they have after God! What did David want when he was in the wilderness?

2. *To see Your power and Your Glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* He did not want the sanctuary so much as to see God *in* the sanctuary. Brethren, it is well to have a love to our own place of worship, but it is infinitely better to have a soul longing for the God we worship and to feel that the place of worship is nothing unless God is there.

3. *Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.* "In the wilderness, when my comforts are cut off, when my son, who was my darling, is seeking my life, my lips shall praise You, for still Your loving kindness is better than life."

4. *Thus will I bless You while I live.* "As long as I live, I will praise You. Every breath of mine shall be perfumed with thankfulness and adoration."

4. *I will lift up my hands in Your name.* "In astonishment at the power of Your great name, and in confidence will I lift them up when they have been hanging down in weakness. I will go forth in holy activity, with uplifted hands in Your name."

5. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.* Orientals, in their feasts, are very fond of fat such as you and I would hardly eat—they think the fat is the choicest part of their diet. So David, using his own metaphor, says that God would satisfy his soul as with the very marrow and fatness of joys.

5. *And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.* A heart full of Grace makes a mouth full of praise! When God makes you inwardly to be content with yourself, you will be outwardly full of thanksgiving and praise.

6. *When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.* Of course, in the wilderness, they had to set a watch against Absalom and his men. And David very likely could hear the noise in the camp as they changed the sentries and marked the hours of the night. "Oh," he said, "while I lie awake, and the watchers are on guard all around, I will make the night to be a time of spiritual feasting—'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness'—and I will make a song at

night unto the God who gives songs in the night. My mouth shall praise You with joyful lips."'

7. 8. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice. My soul follows hard after You.* If he could not keep pace with his Lord and, in some measure lose the joy of walking with God, then he would *run* after Him. If you cannot lean on Christ's arm, keep close at Christ's heels! Be as near Him as you can, like a dog who keeps close to his master. "My soul follows hard after You." Where did David get the Grace and the strength to thus follow after God? Listen—

8. *Your right hand upholds me.* There is the secret upholding of Divine Grace even when the soul cannot attain the fellowship at which it aims! When we are struggling to be near to God, let us thank the Lord who, by His Spirit, works in us the heavenly ardor that makes us run to Him. The last three verses of the Psalm describe what would become of David's enemies.

9. *But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.* The wicked always grovel. They never rise to higher things and their course shall be downward—downward to the grave, downward to eternal death.

10. *They shall fall by the sword.* They took the sword—they shall perish by the sword. They were seeking to slay David—they shall be, themselves, slain.

10. *They shall be a portion for foxes.* Not for lions, but for foxes, or *jackals*—for that is the word—the jackals shall gnaw them in pieces.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God.* David was the king, so you see that he did not rejoice in the slaughter of his enemies, but he *did rejoice in his God*.

11. *Everyone that swears by Him shall glory*. Those who were true and loyal to the king would have reason for rejoicing when the rebels were overthrown. And those who were true and loyal to God would have still greater reason for exultation!

11. *But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* Every true man must be glad that it is so. The mouths of liars will be stopped by the sexton with a shovel full of earth, if in no other way. But every lying tongue in all the world shall be silent, one day, at the judgment bar of God. The Lord bless to us the reading of his Word! 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.

THE DETERMINATION OF CHRIST TO SUFFER FOR HIS PEOPLE
NO. 2443

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 15, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not." Mark 15:23.

OUR Savior, before He was nailed to the Cross, and on the Cross, several times had drinks of different sorts offered to Him. While they were nailing Him to the Cross, they endeavored to make Him drink wine, or vinegar as it is called, mingled with gall. But when He had tasted of it—He *did* taste it—He would not drink it. When He was on the Cross, the soldiers, mocking Him, offered Him vinegar, or their weak drink of which they ordinarily partook, pledging Him in their cups with scorn. And once more, when He said, "I thirst," they took a sponge filled with vinegar, dipped it in hyssop and put it to His lips.

This occasion of offering the wine mingled with myrrh is, I believe, different from all the rest. This wine mingled with myrrh was given to Him as an *act of mercy*. Matthew Henry seems to think that it was prepared by those holy women who were known to attend to the necessities of our Lord. They had followed Him in all His footsteps wherever He went. It was by their bounty that the bag which Judas kept was generally as full as it was required to be, so that out of the store they could go and buy food for their Master and for His disciples. It was these holy women who prepared the spices to embalm Him at His burial. And Matthew Henry thinks that these women, prompted by their compassion for Him, prepared this cup of wine mingled with myrrh that He might be strengthened for His miseries, and that those miseries might, in some degree—be alleviated by the partial stupefaction which a strong draught of wine and myrrh would give Him.

This time our Savior positively declined the cup—"He received it not." The wormwood He tasted, but this He received not at all. He would have nothing to do with it. Why? The answer is not to be found in our Savior's abstemiousness, for He was not abstemious—He was never self-indulgent, but He certainly was never abstemious. He was "the Son of Man" who "came eating and drinking." He felt no repugnance to wine—He, Himself, made it, He Himself drank it. He even earned for Himself the name—"a gluttonous Man and a winebibber"—not deservedly, but because, in contrast to John, who abstemiously refrained from ordinary food, Jesus Christ sat down with publicans and sinners, feasted with the feasters and ate and drank like other men.

Nor do I think the reason is to be found in any love of pain that Christ had, nor in any heartless bravado which would lead Him to say, "I will suffer and I will put the cup away from Me." Far be that from Christ! He never thrust Himself in the way of suffering when it was unnecessary. He did not go to give Himself up into the hands of His enemies before His hour was come. He avoided persecution when the avoidance of the persecution would not be an injury to His cause. He withdrew out of Judea and would not walk in that land because of Herod, who sought to slay Him. I believe that if our Savior had not been the atoning Sacrifice—if His sufferings had been merely those of a martyr—He would have quaffed to the very dregs the cup that was offered Him and would not have left any of it! The reason why He refused the cup, I think, is to be found in another thing altogether.

There is a glorious idea couched in the fact that the Savior put the myrrhed wine cup entirely away from His lips. On the heights of Heaven, the Son of God stood of old, and He looked down and measured how far it was to the utmost depths of misery. He cast up the sum total of all the agonies which a man must endure to descend to the utmost depths of pain and misery. He determined that to be a faithful High Priest and, also, to be a *suffering* One, He would go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, "from the highest throne in Glory to the Cross of deepest woe." This myrrhed cup would have stopped Him within a little of the utmost limit of misery and, therefore, He said, "I will not stop half-way, but I will go all the way. And if this cup can mitigate My sorrow, that is just the reason why I will not drink it, for I have determined that to the utmost lengths of misery I will go, that I will do, and bear, and suffer all that Incarnate God can bear for My people, in My own mortal body."

Now, Beloved, it is this fact that I wish to bring out before you—the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer—and that because the myrrhed cup would have prevented Him from reaching the lowest step of misery, "He received it not." I shall have to show you, first, that this was very frequently the case throughout His life—that He would not take a step which would have diminished His miseries because *He was determined to go the whole length of suffering*. Secondly, I shall try to show you *the reason for this determination*. Then, thirdly, I shall close up by speaking of *the lesson that we may learn from it*.

I. OUR SAVIOR WOULD GO THE WHOLE LENGTH OF MISERY—He would suffer in every respect like as we suffer. He would bear the whole of the tortures of Atonement without even the slightest shadow of mitigation or alleviation. Now, I think I can show you that on many occasions in Christ's life He determined to be tempted in every point in which men are tempted and to be tempted to the utmost limit of the power of temptation. Nor would He accept anything which would have limited the force of the temptation upon man. I will give you some proofs of this.

First, *Christ knew that you and I would be exposed to peril.* He, therefore, determined that He would be exposed to peril, too, and that He would not by any means, when it was in His power, escape from the peril. Let me show Him to you high up there, on the pinnacle of the Tem-

ple. There stands our Master and a fiend by His side, on a giddy eminence, with but little beneath His feet. He stands poised aloft. He looks down the hill on which the Temple is built into the depths below—and the enemy says, "Cast Yourself down, commit Yourself to the care of the angels." It was like this myrrhed cup—"Do not stand in this peril, cast Yourself upon that promise and risk Yourself upon the angels' wings, for they shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash Your foot against a stone." But like as He would not receive this cup, so neither would He receive this deliverance from His peril! So there He stood erect, confident in His God, not using the means of deliverance which the tempter wished Him to exercise, even as He would not drink this cup!

Take another case—*Jesus Christ knew that many of His people would have to suffer bodily needs, poverty and woe*. He therefore hungered. After forty days' fast, when He might have delivered Himself from His hunger by turning stones into bread, one would have said, "It would have been a very innocent act to turn stones into bread and feed Himself." But, "No," says Christ to the gnawing pangs of hunger, "I will let you go as far as you can. I will not turn these stones into bread. I will let hunger exercise all its power upon Me. I will let My body be gnawed by its fierce teeth! I will not mitigate its misery." He would not receive that wine mingled with myrrh that the devil offered Him in the wilderness when he tempted Him to make the stones into bread—He would not take the lessening of His misery!

I will tell you another instance. Many men have attempted to have their lives cut short because they have so much misery and no more hope of being happy. They, therefore, have wished for death. They have wished that they might be as the untimely birth, that they might be forever shut up in the bowels of the earth. *They have longed for death and desired it*—and if an opportunity had cast itself in their way in which they might have died with honor, without having the disgrace of suicide—how many would have accepted the alternative of death! Here is our Savior in the same condition, for He is dragged to the brow of the hill of Nazareth. O Son of Man, Your wisest choice is to be dashed down the sides of the hill on which the city is built! If You are wise, You will let them hurl You headlong—that would be an end of all Your misery, for there are years before You through which You will be roasted at the slow fire of persecution! And afterwards You will have to pass through floods of deepest misery! Do you not think the temptation started up in His mind, "Let Yourself be cast down"? He knew all about it. Had He been cast down, He would have died an honorable death like the death of a Prophet slain in his own country—but no, "passing through the midst of them, He went His way," because, as He refused the wine cup, so He refused a hasty death which would have delivered Him from His miseries.

Do you not observe that I have only just given you specimens? You will find that *all through the Savior's life it was just the same*. You will not find Him in one instance working a miracle to lessen His own bodily fatigue, or to alleviate His own bodily needs and necessities, but always letting the ills of this life wreak themselves upon Him with all their fury! He

hushed the winds, once, but it was for His disciples, not for Himself. He lay asleep in the boat and let the waves toss Him up and down as much as they pleased! He multiplied the loaves and fishes, but it was for the multitude, not for Himself. He could find money in a fish's mouth, but it was to pay the tribute, not for Himself. He could scatter mercies wherever He went—open men's eyes, and deliver many of them from pains—but He never exercised any of His skill upon Himself. If the wind blew, He let it spend itself upon His cheeks and crack them. If the cold was bitter, He let the cold come round Him as it did in the Garden of Gethsemane. If journeying was troublesome, He journeyed where He might have traveled as His Father did—as old Thomas Sternhold says in his fine translation of the Psalms—

"The Lord descended from above,
And bowed the heavens most high,
And underneath His feet He cast
The darkness of the sky.
On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad."

So might Jesus, if He pleased, but He journeyed on in weariness. He might have made the water leap out of the well to His hands, but there He sat and thirsted, while He had power to make fountains gush even from the stone on which He sat! On the Cross, "I thirst," was His cry and yet, if He pleased, He might have opened in Himself rivers of living water—He had them for others, but He had none for Himself. You will observe this fact that in all the history of Christ, never once did He take anything which could have lessened His miseries—He went the whole length—and as on this occasion He refused the wine drugged with myrrh and, so never did He receive anything that had a tendency to prevent Him from going to the requisite lengths of suffering.

II. Now let me show you THE REASON FOR THIS. Was it out of any love to suffering that He thus refused the wine cup? Ah, no, Christ had no *love* of suffering. He had a love of *souls*, but like we, He turned away from suffering. He never *loved* it. We see He did not, for even in the garden He said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." It was His *Human* Nature struggling against suffering, as human nature rightfully does—God has made us so that we do not naturally love suffering—and it is not wrong for us to feel some repugnance to it, for God has implanted that repugnance in us. Christ did not suffer because He loved suffering. Why, then, did He suffer? For two reasons—because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to the completion of the Atonement, which saves to the utmost, and because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to perfect His Character as "a merciful High Priest" who has to care for souls that have gone to the utmost of miseries themselves—that He might know how to succor them that are tempted.

First, I say it *was necessary to make the Atonement complete*. I think that if our Savior had drunk this myrrhed cup, the Atonement would not have been valid. It strikes me that if He had drunk this wine mingled with myrrh, He could not have suffered to the extent that was absolutely

necessary. We believe Christ did, on the Cross, suffer just enough, and not one particle more than was necessary for the redemption of His people. If, then, this wine cup had taken away a part of His sufferings, the ransom price would not have been fully complete—it would not have been fully paid. And if it had but taken away so much as a grain, the Atonement would not have been sufficiently satisfactory. If a man's ransom is to be paid, it must be *all* paid, for though but one single farthing is left unpaid, the man is not fully redeemed and he is not yet totally free. If, then, this drinking of the wine cup had taken out the smallest amount from that fearful price of agony which our Savior paid, the Atonement would have been insufficient only to a degree, but even insufficiency to a degree, however small, would have been enough to have caused perpetual despair, yes, enough to have shut the gates of Heaven against all Believers! The utmost farthing must be paid! Relentless Justice has never yet omitted so much as a fraction of its claim! Nor would it, in this case, have relented in any measure—Christ must pay it all! The wine cup would have prevented His doing that, therefore He would suffer and go the whole length of suffering! He would not stop, but would go through it all.

Again, I say it was *that He might be made a compassionate High Priest.* Someone might have said, "When my Master died, He did not suffer much. He suffered somewhat, but the wine cup prevented much suffering. I dare not touch the wine cup—at least, I dare not take it so as to alleviate my sufferings at all—then I must suffer more than He, for that drugged wine I must not drink. Surely, then, my Master cannot sympathize with *me*, if I, for conscientious motives, bear suffering without accepting alleviations which some think are wrong." "No," said the Master, "no, you shall never say that! If you have to suffer without a comfort, I will let you know that I suffered without a comfort, too." You say, "Oh, if I had some myrrh given me which could mitigate my woe, it would all be well!" "Ah," says the Savior, "but I have had it offered to Me and I will not drink it in order that you may see that I suffered woe without the comfort, without the cordial, without the consolation which you think would enable you to endure it."

O blessed Lord Jesus, You were "tempted in all points like as we are"! Blessed be Your name! This myrrh cup could have put a plate of steel upon Your breast! It would have blunted many darts of suffering and, therefore, You put it aside that You might, naked, suffer every shaft to find its target in Your heart! This myrrh cup would have steeled Your feelings so that You could not be torn by the whips of anguish and, therefore, You would not take its steeling influence, its hardening qualities. You, who did stoop to become a poor, weak worm, "a worm and no man," did bear the agony without making the agony less, or strengthening Your own body to bear it, O blessed High Priest!

Go to Him, you tried and tempted ones! Go to Him and cast your burdens on Him—He can bear them! He has borne burdens heavier than yours! Cast your burden on the Lord, as His shoulders can sustain it! And His shoulders, that have borne trouble without comfort, can bear

your troubles, though they are comfortless ones, too! Do but tell them to your Master and you shall never find a lack of sympathy in Him.

III. And now, what have we to say by way of A LESSON for this short discourse?

When Christ was offered this cup, He would not receive it. Sometimes, Beloved, it is in your power to escape from sufferings for Christ's sake—and you may rightly do so if you can escape from them without injuring the mission upon which your Father has sent you—for as He sent His Son into the world, even so has He sent *you* into the world. You have your mission and there are times when the acceptance of a cordial, or the reception of an escape from peril, would be a degradation to your high dignity, an injury to your office and, therefore, there are times when you should decline even the cup of consolation, itself. You and I are called to hold fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Perhaps our business places us where we have to hold fellowship with Christ in the suffering of contempt. The finger is pointed at us. The lips are sometimes protruded in derision. Sometimes an expression is used towards us, calling us a hypocrite, a cant, a formalist. You may be apt to think, "Oh, that I could avoid all this! I wish I could escape." Can you avoid it and serve your Master, as well? If you can, then drink the myrrh cup, and avoid the misery! But if you cannot—and if it is *proven* that your position is one of duty and one in which you can honor your Master—it is at your peril that you exchange your situation for an easier one, if you exchange it for one less useful!

"Oh," says one, "I work among wicked men and I have to bear a testimony for the Truth of God in their midst. May I not leave the place at once? I feel that I am doing good, there, but the jeers and taunts are so hard to bear that the good I do seems to be always counterbalanced by the misery I suffer." Take care, take care, lest you let the flesh prevail over the spirit! It would be like a myrrh cup to you, for you to leave your job and go to another! It would be the removal of your pain, but ponder a long time before you do it, weigh it well. If your Maker has put you there, to suffer for His name's sake, come not down from the cross to which He has nailed you by a daily crucifixion till you have suffered all! And take not the myrrh cup of an escape until you have borne all for Christ. I think it was holy Polycarp who, when the soldiers came to him to take him to prison, made his escape. But when he found, afterwards, that his doing so had dispirited some Christians and had been attributed to his cowardice—when next the soldiers presented themselves and he had an opportunity to escape, "No," he said, "let me die." It had been foolhardy of him if he had run into the teeth of men, the first time, in order to be put to death. But when he saw that he would serve His Master better by His death than by His life, it would have been an unrighteous thing if He had drunk of the wine cup—if he had made his escape and not died for his Master's sake.

O my Brothers and Sisters, I think that there are many cordials which the world, too, has to offer to the Christian which he must not drink because if his Master wishes him to have fellowship with Him in His suffer-

ing, it is his to suffer so far as his Master wills! You are, perhaps, a man or a woman of a sorrowful spirit. You are given to solitude and loneliness. There are certain amusements which some men say are harmless—they tell you that they are meant for you and ask you to go and take them. You think, "Well, in my low state, surely I might take these things. If I were happy and joyous, I should not need them, but surely my Father, 'like as a father pities his children,' will pity me. And if I do these things, I do them merely for *temporary* comfort, for my heart seems as though it would break if I had not this little temporary excitement."

Take care, take care that it is not the wine cup that prevents you, my Friends! If your Master gives you the wine cup, the golden wine cup filled with the precious wine of the Covenant, the strong promises and sweet fellowship in Christ, drink it without a moment's hesitation! Drink it and be glad, for God has said, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish," and this is the strong drink He gives to you in the golden wine cup of the Savior's fellowship. Drink it and be happy! But if *men* offer it to you, look long and hard before you drink it! It may be you may be right in drinking it—it may not be a wrong thing—but it may be, too, that even a thing that is innocent to others, may be wrong to you! And the taking of that amusement and pleasure into your hands might be like our Savior's taking the myrrh cup and drinking it. It would be a stultifying of you, a preventing you from learning all the lessons of your misery, from going in all the steps of your Redeemer who wishes us to follow Him through all the miseries which He has ordained for us, that they may be the means of fellowship with Him in His suffering.

This is the only lesson I desire to give you at this time. If the Lord impresses it on our minds, it may be of use to us. Only let me say how many there are who would have drunk this wine cup if it had been offered to them! Your Savior has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke! He has robbed you of one who is dear and near to you. Say, Christian, if you had had the myrrh cup put before you, if it had been said, "If you like, that loved one of yours shall live." If it had been offered to you that the life that has been taken away should be spared—could you, with fortitude, have said, "Not my will, but Yours, be done"? Could you have put it away and said, "No, my Master, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Your will be done. And what is more, if it may pass from me, if I need not the suffering, yet if I can honor You more by suffering, and if the loss of my beloved one will serve You and please You, then so let it be. I refuse the comfort when it comes in the way of Your honor. I reject the favored mercy if it comes in the teeth of Your Glory. I am willing to suffer— I care not for Your consolations if I can honor You better without them"?

There are some among you in the time of mourning. Let me just, in conclusion, note a very beautiful thought of a good man on a passage of Scripture. Jesus says in His prayer, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." Do you know why good men die? Do you know why the righteous die? Shall I tell you what it is that kills them? It is Christ's prayer—"Father, I will that they be with Me." It

is that that fetches them up to Heaven! They would stay here if Christ did not pray them to death! Every time a Believer mounts from this earth to Heaven, it is caused by Christ's prayer. "Now," says this good old Divine, "many times Christ and His people pull against one another in prayer. You bend your knees in prayer and say, 'Father, I will that they whom You have given me be with me where I am.' Christ bends His knees and says, 'Father, I will that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.'"

So, you see, one gets hold of him, and the other, too. He cannot be in both places! The beloved one cannot be with Christ and with you, too! Now, what shall be the answer? Put the prayers side by side. You are praying, "Father, I will that they whom you have given me be with me where I am." And there is your Savior, praying that they may be with Him where He is. Now, if you had your choice—if the King should step from His Throne and say, "Here are two supplicants. They are praying opposite to one another—their prayers are clearly contrary to each other—I cannot answer them both." Oh, I am sure, though it were agony, you would start from your feet, and say, "Jesus, not my will, but Yours be done." You would give up your prayer for your sick husband's life, for your sick wife's life, for your dying child's life, if you could realize the thought that Christ was praying in the opposite direction, "Father, I will that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am."

And now we come to the Supper of our Master! Oh, may the Master give us fellowship with Him! Poor sinners that know not Christ, I have hardly a moment in which to address you, but remember, the separation which will be made between you and the Church, tonight, is but a picture of an awful separation which shall be made between you and the Church at the Last Great Day! You will sit upstairs, some of you, to look down upon the solemnity—remember, you may look upon it *here*, but you will not look upon it in Heaven unless your hearts are made new by Christ and unless you are washed in His precious blood!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 15:15-39; LUKE 23:27-49.

We will read two short passages from the Gospels this evening. May the blessed Spirit, who taught the Evangelists to record the sad story of our Lord's sufferings and death, help us to fully enter into the blessed meaning of it while we read it! First turn to Mark 15, verse 15.

Mark 15:15, 16. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas to them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium.* The guard room of Herod's palace, where the Praetorian guards were known to gather.

16-20. *And they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped*

Him. And when they had mocked Him. To the utmost, and gone the full length of their cruel scorn!

20-23. *They took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross. And they brought Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.* They did for Him what they did for others who were crucified— they gave Him myrrhed wine, as a stupefying draught—"but He received it not." He came to suffer and He would bear, even to the end, the full tale of His suffering.

24-27. *And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucified two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left.* They gave Him the place of eminence, as if He were a greater offender than either of the two thieves!

28. *And the Scripture was fulfilled, which says, And He was numbered with the transgressors.* Sinners to the right of Him, sinners to the left of Him, sinners all round Him—compassed about with those who sinned in the very highest degree by putting Him to death. "He was numbered with the transgressors." Oh, that sweet word! It is the hope of transgressors, now, that He was counted with them! And for His sake all the blessings of Heaven now descend upon transgressors who accept Him as their Substitute and Savior!

29. *And they that passed by railed on Him.* Not only those who sat down to gloat their cruel eyes upon His miseries, but even the passers-by, "They that passed by, railed on Him."

29, 30. *Wagging their heads and saying, Ah, You that destroys the Temple, and builds it in three day, save Yourself, and come down from the Cross.* He never said He would destroy the literal Temple. He did, however, say concerning the Temple of His body, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up," and *He did raise it up in three days* after they had destroyed it!

31. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save.* What they said in bitter scorn was true, for mighty love had bound His hands from self-salvation. Infinite in love, found guilty of excess of love to men, "He saved others; Himself He could not save."

32, 33. *Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the Cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.* A supernatural darkness which could not have occurred according to the laws of Nature. It did, as it were, "set a tabernacle for the sun"—the Sun of Righteousness was canopied for a while in darkness, that no longer might those horrible eyes gaze upon His terrible anguish!

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?* There was a denser darkness over His spirit than was over all the land—and out of that darkness came this cry of agony!

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calls Elijah.* Ah, me! This was either a cruel jest upon our Savior's prayer or an utter misapprehension of it!

36. *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.* Jesus did receive this vinegar and so fulfilled Psalm 69:21—"In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

37, 38. *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.* Even as the flesh of Christ, which is the veil of the Incarnate God, was rent, so now was the veil of mystery taken away! The Temple in her sorrow rent her veil. The old Ceremonial Law passed away with this token of grief by the rending of the veil! It was a strong—I might say, a *massive* veil—it could not have been torn by any ordinary means, but when the hand of God takes hold upon the veil of Jewish *types*, they readily tear and, into the innermost mystery of the Holy of Holies, we may gaze, yes, and through it we may enter!

39. *And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, He said, Truly this Man was the Son of God.* Convinced by the Cross! Oh, the triumphs of Christ! The last word He speaks won this testimony from the centurion in charge of the Crucifixion! Now we will read part of Luke's narrative.

Luke 23:27-31. *And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* Our Savior, even amidst the greatest sufferings, seemed almost to forget His suffering in the deep sympathy that He had for the people around Him! He pictured in His mind's eye that awful siege of Jerusalem. Who can read it, as Josephus describes it, without feeling the deepest horror? Oh, the misery of the women and of the children in that dreadful day when the zealots turned against each other within the city and fought to the death! And when the Roman soldiers, pitiless as wolves, at last stormed the place! Truly did the Savior say of it that there would be no day like it—neither was there—it was the concentration of human misery and our Lord wept because He foresaw what it would be. And He bade these poor women reserve their tears for those awful sorrows.

32, 33 *And there were also two others, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Cal-*

vary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. O blessed Master they did not spare You any scorn! There was no mode of expressing their contempt which their malignity did not invent! Truly, "He was numbered with the transgressors." You could not count the three sufferers on Calvary without counting Him—He was so completely numbered with the others that He must be reckoned as one of them!

34. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* It was all that He could say in their favor, and He did say that. If there is anything to be said in your favor, O my fellow Sinner, Christ will say it! And if there is nothing good in you that His eyes can light upon, He will pray on His own account—"Father, forgive them for My sake."

34. *And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.* His garments were the executioners' perquisites. Pitilessly they took them from Him and left Him naked in His shameful sorrow.

35. *And the people stood beholding.* There was no pity in their eyes. Not one of them turned away his face because he could not look upon so disgraceful a deed.

35. *And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the chosen of God.* I have already reminded you that there was a deep truth hidden away in what these cruel mockers said, for Jesus must give Himself up as a ransom if we were to be redeemed.

36-38. *And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself. And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,* For these were the three languages known to the throng, and Pilate invited them all to read in "Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew."

38, 39. *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If You are Christ, save Yourself and us.* Poor man, even though he is dying a felon's death, he must be in the swim with the multitude! He must keep in with the fashion so strong, so powerful—it is the popular current with all mankind!

40-42. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.* It was strange that Christ should find a friend dying on the cross by His side. Nobody else spoke to Him about a Kingdom. I am afraid that even His former followers began to think that it was all a delusion. But this dying thief cheers the heart of Jesus by the mention of a Kingdom and by making a request to Him concerning that Kingdom even when the King was in His death agony!

43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.* The Master, you see, uses His old phraseology. In His preaching He had been accustomed to say, "Verily, verily," and here He is, even on the Cross, still the same Preacher, for there was such as-

surance, such confidence, such Truth, in all His words, that He never had to alter His style of speaking! "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Well does our poet put it—

"He that distributes crowns and thrones,
Hangs on a tree and bleeds and groans."

He was distributing these crowns and thrones even while hanging on the tree! "Tell it among the nations that the Lord reigns from the tree," may not be an exact translation of the Psalm, but it is true, Psalm or no Psalm!

44. *And it was about the sixth hour.* About noon, when the sun was at its height.

44. *And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.* Three o'clock in the afternoon.

45. *And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst.* As if the great light of Heaven and the pattern of heavenly things were both disturbed. The sun puts on mourning and the Temple rends her veil in horror at the awful deed enacted on the Cross!

46. *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father*—Is it not sweet to see how Jesus begins and ends His prayers on the Cross with, "Father"?

46-48. *Into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.* A strange ending to that day, was it not? The three hours' darkness and the death cry of the Christ had not converted them, but it had *convicted* them of sin. They felt that a great and heinous crime had been committed and, though they had come together as to a mere show or sight, they went away from the spectacle impressed as they had never been before—"All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

49. *And all His acquaintances and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.* In these doings on Calvary you and I have a share—in their guilt, or else in their merit. Oh, that we may not be condemned with those who were guilty of His death, but may we be cleansed by that precious blood which puts away the sin of all who believe on Him!

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.

CHEERING WORDS
NO. 2444

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 22, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love." John 15:9.

THE Savior was about to leave His disciples and this was the hardest trial which they had ever experienced. As there could be no trial to them like the loss of the Savior's Presence, it was at this time Jesus brought forth His richest consolation. He seems to have kept the best wine and the most potent cordial till the time when their spirits most required to be comforted. He said to them more fully than He had ever said it before, "Take this for your comfort—live upon it while I am absent from you. Live upon it always—that as the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you."

But what is this richest of all cordials? What is this marrow and fatness? It is the *assurance* of His love to us and surely there cannot be a more delightful thought that can fill the soul of a mortal than this—"The Son of God loves me." Did you ever sit down for half an hour and try to masticate and digest this thought? That God should *pity* me, I can understand, being so far inferior to Himself and so full of misery. That He should be *generous* to me, I can comprehend, from the liberality and bounty of His Nature and from my great necessities. But that He should *love* me is amazing! I cannot see anything lovely in myself and there are many who see that there is much ugliness about me—and I do not doubt that there is—and yet He who knows me better than I know myself and is not unmindful of my infirmities and weaknesses says He loves me! He does not put me at arm's length and then feed me from His bounty—that would be gracious—He opens wide His bosom and takes me into His heart! He closes the golden doors and takes me in to dwell forever, that in the ivory palaces I may be made glad with the cassia and the aloes of His delightful Presence!

Man, did you ever get this into you soul? Then though you may be clothed in rags, you will feel as though you were wrapped about with imperial purple! Although you may dwell in a very poor and lonely cottage, when this thought shines upon you, you would not change your cottage for a palace! Unto which of the angels did He ever say this? I believe angels are the subjects of Divine Love in a certain sense, but I have never read of Christ saying to them, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." This is the special privilege for the sons of Adam who have fallen which angels never have. How marvelous! And is it not more than marvelous, that God should have selected *me* out of the sons of Adam? Perhaps there is nothing in any of you which you can look upon as a

reason why God should love you. Did I say, "perhaps"? Why, there are 10,000 things about every one of us that might have won for us the Almighty's hatred! Instead of this, He says He loves us, His people! Surely, if I were to say no more, but sit down and leave you to think over the fact that God loves you and that your name is dear to Jehovah, your souls might be satisfied as with marrow and fatness!

The text, itself, clearly contains two things—*a declaration and an exhortation.*

I. THE DECLARATION is like a door on two hinges and on these the text swings. The hinges are, "as," and, "so"—"*As* the Father has loved Me, *so* have I loved you." What if I call them two diamond pivots upon which the pearly gate of Love turns to shut in God's people?

These words may be viewed in four lights. The word, "as," is used here for the sake of *affirmation.* The Savior does as much as say, in the most solemn manner possible, to His believing people, "I love you and I love you as surely as My Father loves Me." There are a great many new doctrines starting up, nowadays, and perhaps tomorrow morning there will be another. New opinions are constantly coming up, but I do not remember ever hearing anybody say that the Father does not love the Son. Whatever new heresies there may be—and there will be plenty of them—I do not suppose that this will ever be the subject of heresy. It is so firmly believed, that I never heard a sermon preached to prove it—it is a doctrine taken for granted and laid hold of as being an elementary Truth of the Christian system. Jesus Christ, then, says, "You do not doubt that the Father loves Me. Now, just as surely as the Father loves Me, I say, solemnly and truly, that I love you." He says this to each of us who trusts in Him—to all of you poor, troubled Christians who have so many cares that you would not like to count them—you to whom it was whispered, the other day—

"The Lord has quite forsaken you—
Your God will be gracious no more."

"No," says Jesus, "you do not think that the Father has cast Me off, or ceased to love Me? Then do not think that I have cast you off, or ceased to love you. You are the purchase of My blood and as surely as the Father loves Me, so do I still love you."

This, "as," may not only be regarded as an affirmation, but also what is very near akin to it, a *confirmation.* In order to strengthen their faith, God has been pleased to give His people not merely His Word, but tokens and signs to confirm His Word. When Noah had been delivered from the flood by means of an ark, he might still have been very timid at the first shower of rain and have been afraid that the world was going to be drowned, again. But to remove any fears he might have had, lo, there appears in the heavens God's rainbow, a bow of many colors, illustrating the joy which there should be in the hearts of those with whom God had made a Covenant! Not a black bow as though it were bent on destruction, nor a crimson bow as though it were dipped in blood—but a rainbow of many colors, a bow turned upwards, not shooting the arrows of vengeance upon mankind, but hinting to us that we may shoot our prayers up to Heaven—a bow unstrung and a bow without an arrow to show that

God had ceased from warring with His creatures and had made peace with man. As soon as Noah saw that rainbow, he said, "I shall not be drowned, the world will not be destroyed by a flood!"

God also gave His servant, David, a sign when He told him that as long as the sun and moon should shine in their places, He would not break His Covenant with David. The rainbow is a very sweet sign, but we cannot always see it. And the sun and moon are not always visible, so the Lord has been pleased to give to His people a sign which is always visible, a symbol which is good by day and by night, and which is not dependent upon raindrops and sunbeams. The Christian, by the eyes of faith, can always look up to Heaven and see Christ in the bosom of His Father! You have no doubt, I am sure, that Christ is the object of Divine affection. You can see it clearly and there is no doctrinal error at all clouding your view of the love of the Father for His Son. Now this is, to me, the token that Jesus Christ loves me! I look up and see Jesus resting in His Father's heart—and I, a poor sinner, resting upon Jesus and finding all my help in Him—know that I am in Christ's heart and that nothing shall ever pluck me from it. I know this because I have the sign that, "as" the Father loves the Son, "so" Christ loves me. May God give us Grace to see and rejoice in this, "as," of confirmation!

But perhaps the fullness of this meaning lies in the fact that this is an, "as," and a, "so," of *comparison*. I think the text means that in the same way as the Father loves the Son, just in the same way Jesus loves His people. And how does the Father love the Son? He loved Him without beginning! You meet with strange people, sometimes, but I do not recollect ever meeting with anyone who thought that God the Father did not, at some time or other, love the Son. It is commonly and currently believed among all who accept the Bible as true, that from everlasting to everlasting the love of God is set upon His Son. We believe that long "before worlds were made or time began" the Lord Jesus Christ was dear to His eternal Father. Now, as the Father loves Christ, so Christ loves us and, therefore, He loves us without beginning! Long before the lamps of Heaven were kindled, or the stars began to twinkle in the sky—when as yet all this world slept in the mind of God as unborn forests sleep within the acorn—we were in the heart of Christ!

When we rest upon Christ, we may be infallibly certain that His foreseeing eyes beheld us and that His foreloving heart loved us when as yet we had no being! In the book wherein all His members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them, there He read our names, our forms, our lineaments. He saw our characters and knew our sins—

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

You can go back to the beginning of *human* affection—you can easily go back to the beginning of your love to God, but God's love to us is a deep which has no bottom—

"The streams of love
I trace up to their Fountain—God!
And in His mighty breast I see

Eternal thoughts of love to me."

And I suppose we all believe *that the Father loves His Son without end.* You have no idea, I suppose, that at any time the Father will cease to love His own dear Son. You cannot suppose such a thing—your mind can hardly conjure up such a blasphemous thought as that there should ever be a division among the Persons of the Trinity and that Jesus Christ should be driven from His Father's heart! "Now," says Christ, "as the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you," that is, without end—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever!
Nothing from His love can sever."

This is a great and precious Truth of God, but I know some people who use it very badly, for they say, "I was in Christ once and, therefore, I must be in Christ now." But that is not the question! If you were once in Christ, you *are* in Christ now—but can you really and truly say that you are in Christ now? Are you now resting upon Him? Are you now walking in His ways? Are you now reflecting His image? Are you now trusting that His Spirit dwells in you? If not, I do not care *what* you say about having been *once* in Christ, for I do not believe *that* unless you are in Christ now! This Truth, which you use as a buttress for your presumption, should rather be used as a stimulus to self-examination! Remember, it is written, "But if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." And if you have drawn back, you have given clear proof that His soul has no pleasure in you, for they who are in Christ Jesus are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation—they are preserved by Christ Jesus—they are sanctified by His indwelling Spirit and their path, according to Solomon, "is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." God grant that we may prove our calling by our perseverance!

Let us, just for a moment, suck in the Truth of this very precious doctrine that, as surely as the Father will always continue to love Jesus Christ, so Jesus Christ will always continue to love us. Some of us, perhaps, look forward to old age without expecting any great delight in it. There are times when the grinders fail because they are few and they that look out of the windows are darkened. But, Saint, you need not fear the loosing of the silver cord, for your God shall never change—*His* eyes shall not wax dim—His natural force shall never abate! If you should be bowed double with infirmity, yet remember that the everlasting God faints not, neither is weary and His love for you will never cease! Perhaps at times we look forward to death with a sort of shiver. I know that there are seasons when even the very best of God's servants do not find death the sweetest possible subject for contemplation, but I do not think that any of us who believe in Jesus have the slightest reason to be afraid to die. On the contrary, we may rejoice in it, for our Savior will not leave us in the hour of death. Still is He in the Father's bosom and still shall we be there even when the chill floods are about us and the crashing of the eternal waves shall be sounding in our ears! Rest confident, Christian, that even down to the grave, Christ will go with you and that up, again, from it, He will be your Guide and your Companion to the Celestial Hills!

I am sure you are all perfectly agreed, too, that God the Father loves Jesus Christ *without any change*. You do not believe, as instructed disciples, that the Father loved Jesus Christ more, at one time, than at another. It is our belief that when Christ said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He was still as dear to His Father's heart as He ever had been. There was a hiding of His face from His Son, but not a turning away of His heart! Can you suppose that His Father loved Him the least when *He was most obedient*? When He was obedient unto *death* and fulfilled His Father's will at all hazards in the awful darkness, do you think that, then, the Father's heart was cold and stony towards Him? Oh, no! It was but a change of manifestation, but His inward love was still the same!

Now, Christian, take this for your own comfort, that there is never any change in Jesus Christ's love to those who rest in Him. Yesterday you were on Tabor's top and you said, "He loves me." Today you are in the Valley of Humiliation, but He loves you just the same. On the hill Mizar and far away among the Hermons, you heard His voice which spoke so sweetly with the turtle-notes of love. And now, on the sea, or even *in* the sea, when all his waves and billows go over you, and deep calls unto deep at the noise of his waterspouts, He is just as loving to you as ever He was! He does not change one whit. If you lived in certain lands, you might look up and see on the mountain some glorious old peak lifting its snow-white head into the clouds. When you look up the next morning, can you see the mountain? No, you see nothing but fog. Is there no mountain? Oh, yes—

"The mountains, when in darkness hidden,
Are real as in the day."

So is it with you. You look up today and see your Father's love and rejoice in it—tomorrow you may not see it so clearly, but it has not gone, for it abides fixed and stable—and never changes. Gourds may grow and wither, but God's love neither grows *nor* withers—it knows not the shadow of a change! As the Father loves Christ without change, so does Christ love us without change.

Once more and then we shall entrench upon another interpretation of the word, "as." I think it also means that *the Father loves the Son without any measure*. I was going to say that this is an, "as," of degree, but it is a degree without any degree, or rather, it is a degree which cannot be measured! You cannot say of the Father's love to the Son that He loves Him up to such a point and there stops—and you cannot say of Jesus Christ's love to His people that He loves them so much, but does not love them any farther—

"Oh, no! Christ loves His Church,
His glory 'tis to bless
He cannot love her more,
He will not love her less."

The whole heart of Christ was emptied into His people's hearts! You say His people's hearts could not hold it all? Very likely, but that is no reason why Christ *did not give us all*. If I cannot hold all the sea, yet God may give me all the sea. The Christian is filled with all the fullness of

God. He has as much of Christ in him as he can hold. He is in Christ and Christ is in him. He dwells in God and God dwells in him. Both of these are Scriptural expressions. There is no conceivable limit to the love of God to us in Jesus Christ and if you need proof of it, go to Calvary and see, there, how He gave Himself for us—how He was stripped naked to His shame that He might clothe us! How He spared neither hands, nor feet, nor head, nor back—no, He spared not even His own heart—but poured out from it blood and water! "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for" those whom He loves. There cannot be greater love than that of Christ! He went as far as infinity could go in love and do you know how far that is? No—

"Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away"

at the thought of Infinite Love stretching its wings and putting itself forth to its highest pitch. Such is Jesus Christ's love to you!

What was that you said the other night? That you were afraid you would exhaust the patience of God? A little fish said, once, he was afraid he would drink the sea dry, but there was never any the less water in the sea for all that he drank, for he was in the sea and all he drank was still in the sea! So all that we get from God is still in God, for, "in Him we live, and move and have our being." If you could give to a poor man in the street any quantity of money and still have just as much in your own pockets, no, if you could still have *the same money* in your own pockets that you had given to him, the man would say, "Well, giving does not impoverish you, restraining does not enrich you and, therefore you may well give freely." Oh, there are some of us who have such large appetites for Divine Love! I have sometimes felt such hungering after my God that I thought my soul could never be satisfied. I have thirsted after Him till I have felt like behemoth, who trusts that he can drink up Jordan at a draught! But there is enough in God to satisfy all our soul's needs. We sometimes sing what is strictly true—

"All my capacious powers can wish,
In You do richly meet."

Come, then, Beloved, you have a full Savior, a precious Savior, one who loves you without measure, without any degree, even as the Father loves Him! There is much food here for those who know how to feed upon it. May the Holy Spirit help us to do so!

II. Let me now ask your patient attention while I speak upon THE EXHORTATION OF THE TEXT—"Continue in My love."

"What, what?" asks one, "does He love us with an everlasting love and yet thus admonishes us, 'Continue in My love'?" Yes, yes—the certainty of the thing does not at all weaken the force of the precept. This is God's plan, to work out His own purpose by an exhortation. Diligent students of God's Word must have noticed that the very things which in one part of Scripture are spoken of as unconditional gifts, are, in other parts spoken of as blessings to be anxiously desired and eagerly sought after. The two things are correct and consistent, one with the other, only some people get one of their eyes bound up so that they are not able to see two Truths at the same time! I am thankful if you can see one, but I should

be still more glad if you could see two because I think that *then* you would be more like the perfect man in Christ Jesus who enters into life with both eyes! You find in one place that God is exhorting His people to good works as if their good works were all their own—and yet in another place He tells them that their good works are the gifts of His Spirit! In one place He tells the saints that they *shall* hold on their way and in another place He exhorts them *to* hold on their way. This is not at all inconsistent because the exhortation, by God's Grace applied to the heart, ministers to the fulfillment of the decree. My good old grandfather, I think, was quite right, when he said, "I rest my salvation upon the finished work of Jesus Christ as if I had never performed a good work in all my life. And then I endeavor to do good works as if everything depended upon them." This is what the Savior seems to say to His disciples, "Continue in My love, continue in the path of obedience, in the path of faith and, by your keeping of this exhortation shall My purpose be fulfilled, and you shall be preserved in My love."

Not that this is exactly the meaning of the text. Although this may lie on the surface, it seems to me rather to suggest such counsel as this, "*Continue to exhibit to others the love which I have exhibited to you.*" Some professed Christians never get into Christ's love at all in this sense of it. It strikes me that one of the truest signs of Grace in the young Christian is his love to others. As soon as ever he is, himself saved, he wants to have other people saved! I do not believe that Heaven is a place into which, if I get there, I shall be eternally happy at the thought of other people being shut out. On the contrary, I look forward to it as the place where Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied—and it is not a little that will satisfy Him!

If you ever get any comfort from the thought of others being shut out, you may keep your comfort to yourselves. My comfort is and I hope it always will be, to labor to be the means of bringing others in. Oh, to bring sinners to Christ! Oh, to feel the same love beating in our hearts which Christ has beating in His—not to the same degree, of course, but the same kind of love. Oh, to be baptized into that same river of love in which Christ was baptized, and to come out of it to continue in the same sort of love, so as to have the same love to others which Jesus Christ had to us! Do not be afraid of having too much love for precious souls. Do not think that you will ever go beyond the love of Jesus Christ in that matter. Poor cold hearts as we are, how shall we warm into anything like His affection?—

"Did Christ over sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?"

Ah, there are some cheeks that were never wet with the tears for others, yet! And there are some hearts that never were ready to break for the conversion of others! "Well," says one, "every tub must stand on its own bottom." Yes, Sir, and if you trust to *yourself*, it will be to your everlasting ruin! If you have found honey, your first desire is that another should taste of its sweetness and, having found Christ, yourself, your first instinct will be to turn round and say to others, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." I find that when I preach the Gos-

pel without tenderness, I do not get such a blessing as I do when it melts my own soul. It is a good thing when the preacher finds his own heart breaking. Heart-*broken* ministers are very soon made heart-*breaking* ministers! Love to others has a kind of sympathetic influence and under the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, when men see that we care about them, they are often led to care about themselves. May all Christians here get fully into Christ's love and learn to look at sinners as Christ looked at them in all their awful danger—and weep over them even as Christ wept over Jerusalem!

I think, however, that the Savior meant even a little more than this. Sometimes we get into Christ's love and *enjoy it in our own hearts*. It is the sweetest thing this side Heaven to know and enjoy the love of Jesus Christ, to have our head lying on His bosom so that we can feel His heart beat, and then to hear Him say, "I have loved you and given Myself for you." You know this, don't you? Then I know your prayer will be like that of the spouse, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine." I do not know how it is with you, but I find it rather more easy to *get into* this state than to *stay* there. I can get up the mountain, by God's Grace, but the difficulty is to stay there. Peter said, "It is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles." Yes, but it is not so easy to build *one* tabernacle upon the mountain. Christ's love-visits are so often like those of angels—few and far between! But yet we cannot blame our Beloved. Forbid it, my tongue, that you should ever say a word against Him! No, He would never turn me out of doors. The fault is my own—it is I who leave the table and refuse to stay with Him any longer. Oh, may His love bind us so fast to the altar that we may never stray from it, but may continue in His love!

"Well," says one, "I do not think that any man could stay long in communion with Christ if he had as many troubles as I have." Did you ever read about Enoch? We are told that he lived 365 years and walked with God. And if Enoch walked with God so long, do you think that you cannot walk with Him for the few years of your short life? "Oh," you say, "but Enoch was differently situated from what I am." And yet it is written, "Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters," which seems to say that the common engagements of life and the ordinary cares of a family need not break off our walking with God! "But," you say, "he did not live in such times as these." No, he did *not* live in such good ones, for he lived before the rising of the Sun—he lived in the twilight, in the dim, dark ages before the great Sun of Righteousness had arisen with healing beneath His wings! Enoch walked with God nearly 400 years, but there are some of us who cannot walk with Him for 400 hours!

Oh, may the Lord grant us more Grace, for that is where the mischief lies! The most of God's people, I am afraid, are in the condition of being just barely alive. Sometimes a man is washed up on a rock and you put your hand to his bosom to see if there is any heat left in him, and hold a mirror to his nose to see if he has any breath. You look for signs and evidences and, at last you say, "Yes, he is alive!" And this is just like a great many of you! You have to look for signs and evidences to know if you are

alive! You are just washed up on the Rock and that is all. But look at many of us here—we do not need signs and evidences! We are alive, by God's Grace, and we know that we are! We can talk and laugh, and eat and drink, and engage in business. We are perfectly sure that we are alive because we are in good health! And so it is with Christians when they get to be in good sound *spiritual* health and are enabled, by Divine Grace, to do much for their Master! I would not be satisfied with being merely alive if I were lying stretched upon the bed and someone should say to me, "Well, you know you are alive," I would tell him that I was not satisfied merely with *that*—I wanted to be healthy and well! God grant that we may not only *know* Christ's love, but that we may get into the soul of it, into the marrow and fatness of it—till we *live* in it—and then may God's Grace help us to continue in it!

But there are some poor souls here who have never got into this love at all, nor do they know anything about it. Perhaps, dear Friends, you desire to know it. Well, there is only one place where you can see it. The window through which you can look into God's heart is the Cross of Christ! If you want to read the love of God, go and look through the wounds of the Savior! And as you stand looking through those wounds, you will, if you listen, hear a voice saying—

"Love's redeeming work is done!
Come, and welcome, Sinner, come!"

I have never heard of Jesus Christ shutting the door against a sinner. There is a notice that is put in some gentlemen's parks stating that they do not allow beggars or dogs there. But Jesus Christ puts up a notice that He *does* allow beggars! In fact, there are none but beggars who ever go to Him—and even those who are such beggars that you would not pick their clothes from a dunghill, Jesus Christ receives into His house, into His heart, into the bath of His blood and wraps them in the robe of His perfect righteousness! O poor Sinner, come and try Him, and He will not cast you out!

EXPOSITION B Y C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15.

Verse 1. *I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.* Not only the Mosaic Law, but the whole of creation is full of types of Christ. All the vines that we see in this world are only, as it were, typical, but Christ is the *substance*—the substance of Nature as well as of Grace. "I am the true Vine," and the real Husbandman, who watches over everything, who has the whole Church, yes, the whole universe, under His care, is the great Father. "My Father is the Husbandman."

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* It has no right to be there, for it is not there by a vital union—it will only harbor mischief if it is allowed to remain. Therefore let it be taken away and taken away it certainly will be by the Husbandman who makes no mistakes.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* So there is taking away for the fruitless branches and pruning for the fruit-bearing branches! Are you suffering under the prun-

ing-knife just now? Accept it joyfully! How much better that the knife should cut off your superfluities than that it should cut you off! The mercy is that although God will purge and prune His vine branches, He will not destroy them!

3. *Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.* Christ had so dealt with His disciples that He left them like a pruned branch, ready and prepared for fruitfulness.

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* The pruning is nothing without the abiding in Christ. You may suffer again and again, but no good can come of it except you have vital, continuous, everlasting *union with Christ*. You cannot take a branch away from the vine for a little while and then put it back again—its life depends upon the perfect continuity of its union. So is it with us and Christ—the branch is in the Vine, and the Vine is in the branch. The very essence and sap of the Vine are in the branch even as the branch is part and parcel of the Vine.

4, 5. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches.* You are not the Vine—do not think that you are! And if God blesses you and makes you of some importance in the Church, yet do not *dream* that you are the Church, that you are the very root and stem of it. Ah, no, at the utmost, " you are the branches"!

5. *He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit.* Oh, what a searching word is this! Are we bringing forth much fruit? I trust, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we are bringing forth *some* fruit, but, oh, what a test is this, "He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." Christ expects much from those who have this doubly high privilege of having Him in them and of being, themselves, in Him!

5, 6. *For without Me you can do nothing. If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* And are there enough of them for that? It is enough to bring tears into one's eyes to think that there should be enough fruitless, unabiding—merely nominal members of Christ's Church—for men to gather to make a fire! Oh, sad, sad thing is this! It is the grief of the Church! It is the sorrow of God's ministers! It ought to call for great self-examination in our own hearts that mere professors—those who apostatize after having made a profession of religion—do not seem to have been thought by the Savior to be here and there one, but to be so many that "men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

7. *If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Power in prayer is dependent upon full enjoyment of union and communion with Christ! It is not every man who can ask of God what he wills and get it—it is such a man, and such a man only—as shall be found abiding in Christ and having Christ's Words abiding in him. If we do not take notice of what Christ says, can we expect that He will take notice of what we say? If we do not obey Him when He asks this and that of us, how can we reckon that He will give us

this and that when we ask it of Him? No, this is the condition of power in prayer, "If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you."

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* You shall be known to be the disciples of the much fruit-bearing Savior! He was no moderately good Man. He was not One who was only a little useful in the world. Our blessed Master was perfectly consecrated! He abounded in every good word and work and, unless we are the same, how shall men think that we are His disciples?

9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.* Matchless, matchless Word of God! The love of God the Father to the Son is the immeasurable measure of the love of Christ to His people—without beginning, without end, without change, without bounds! As the Father loved Christ, so has Christ loved us.

9. *Continue in My love.* Abide in it, live in it as the fish lives in the stream, enjoy it—do nothing contrary to it.

10, 11. *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as 1 have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* When Christ cannot rejoice in us, you may rest assured that we cannot rejoice in ourselves! But when His Grace so operates upon us that He sees that in us which gives Him contentment, then it is that we shall feel a blessed contentment ourselves.

12. *This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you.* I am sure you will never love each other too much. You cannot go beyond this rule—"Love one another, as I have loved you."

13. *Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.* What more has he that he can lay down when, having given up all else, he gives life, itself, for them?

14. *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.* You cannot be His friends if you are disobedient to His commands. An act of disobedience is unfriendliness. Yes, and the omission of obedience is unfriendliness to Christ. I wish we would always remember that every sin, either of omission or of commission, is an unfriendly act towards our best Friend.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.* The Law made man do this and that, but it communicated very little of the secret counsels of God. But there is a holy familiarity between Christ and His people, a sacred confidence which Christ has manifested towards us in revealing the very heart of God to us and, therefore, we are put upon a very high standing, not as servants, but as friends. O friends of Christ, show yourselves friendly by your entire obedience to His gracious will!

16. *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained, yes, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to*

you. Fruitfulness, perseverance, and power in prayer—these are the priceless gifts that come to us through our being one with Christ!

17. *These things I command you, that you love one another.* As if there were many things in that one command. It is but one command, but it is so comprehensive that all the commandments are fulfilled in this one, "that you love one another."

18. *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.* So you need not be at all surprised if the world hates you.

19. *If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* Therefore expect it, in some form or other, for you will be sure to meet with it! The seed of the serpent never will love the seed of the woman.

20, 21. *Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My sayings, they will keep yours, also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.* "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin"—as if all the rest would scarcely have been sin at all in comparison with that sin against the Light of God which men committed after Christ had spoken to them! What an amazing thing it is that the very Word of God which is the creation of all good should, through the perversity of men's will, become, also, the creation of evil!

22, 23. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me, hates My Father, also.* There is a hatred of God in all hatred of the Mediator! Men may say that they love God, and yet despise Christ, but it cannot be so. Christ is so truly God and so clear a manifestation of God that if men knew God, they would certainly hate Him if they hate Christ!

24-27, *If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this came to pass that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause. But when the Comforter comes, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and you, also, shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

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 LAST SERMON FOR THE YEAR
NO. 2445

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 29, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1869.

"Give an account of your stewardship, for you may no longer be steward." Luke 16:2.

THE first part of this text applies to us all. The second part will apply to each one of us before long. "Give an account of your stewardship," is a command that may be addressed to the ungodly. They are accountable to God for all that they have, or have ever had, or ever shall have. The Law of the Lord is not relaxed because they have sinned—they still remain responsible to God even though they attempt to cast off the yoke of the Almighty. As creatures formed by the Divine hand and sustained by Divine power, they are bound to serve God. And if they do not, and will not, His claims upon them do not cease—and to each of them He says, "Give an account of your stewardship."

This text may also be applied to the children of God, to the godly—in a different sense, however, and after another fashion. For, first of all, the godly are God's *children*—they are accounted as standing in Christ. They are no longer merely God's subjects, for what they owed to God as sinners has all been discharged by Jesus Christ, their Substitute and Savior. They have, therefore, been placed on a different footing from other men. But having been saved by Grace and adopted into God's family, they have had entrusted to them talents which they are to use to His honor and Glory. Being the Lord's children and being saved, they become His servants—and as His servants they are under responsibility to God and they will all have to give to Him an account of their stewardship.

Look at Eli. I have no doubt that he was a saved man, but God made him a steward over his own family as well as a Prophet to Israel, and he had to give an account of his stewardship. And because he had not been faithful in it, although he was not eternally condemned, yet he was made to suffer most miserably when he was told that the whole of his house would be swept away—and also when he heard of the deaths of his sons and, as the direst news of all, learned that the Ark of God was taken by the Philistines. God visited him in his capacity of steward, made him give his account, and awarded him *in this life* a heavy penalty for his unfaithfulness! And I do not doubt that many a child of God who has been saved at the last, yet, being found unfaithful as a steward, has had to suffer much, has lost much of honor and much of fellowship with God—and much of high advancement in the way of Grace which he might otherwise have obtained.

David was another such steward. He was not a lost soul—I have no doubt that he is among the saved and blessed saints in Heaven—but as a steward he was not found faithful. You remember how grievously he sinned and from that moment his family was full of rebellion, his kingdom was full of trouble and he went with broken bones all the way down to his grave! Hence I may say to you, children of God, who are not under the Law—and I do not address you at all in a legal strain when I so speak to you—*you also have a stewardship*. Give an account of it, or else, perhaps, you may no longer be spared. Or, being spared, yet you may still have tokens of your Lord's displeasure which you may carry with you even to your tomb. Thank God you shall leave them there! But it would be more for God's Glory and for your own comfort to not have them at all.

I desire, on this last Sabbath evening of another year, not so much to speak to you, as to get you to talk to yourselves. So, first, we will think together upon the *reasonable demand made in our text*—"Give an account of your stewardship." Next, we will examine *some reasons why we should at once give an account of our stewardship.* And, lastly, we will consider *the weighty reason in the text* which will come with force to each of us sooner or later—"You may no longer be steward."

I. First, then, let us consider this REASONABLE DEMAND and let each one of us try to comply with it—"Give an account of your stewardship." You man of God, you Christless soul, you aged man, you young Sister, "Give an account of your stewardship."

First, give an account of the stewardship of *your time*. How have you spent it? Have not many hours been allowed to run to waste, or worse than waste, in frivolity and sin? Have you lived as a dying man should live? Have you employed your hours as remembering that they are very few and more precious than the diamonds in an emperor's crown? What about your time? Has there not been much of it spent in indolence, in frothy talk, or that did not minister to edification? You need not accuse yourself for time spent in lawful recreation that may sustain your body and better fit it for the Lord's service. It is well that you should have such recreation, but how much time is utterly wasted by some people, neither used for the good of this world, nor of that which is to come, but wholly frittered away in the service of sin, self and Satan? Where, for instance, did some of you spend yesterday—how did you employ its precious hours? I will but bring that one day to your remembrance—was it a well-spent day? Is that hour well spent that is passed in the company of drunks? Do you call that day well spent that is given up to rioting, or that night that is defiled with wantonness? I charge you to answer this question! For every moment that God has lent to you, He will ask for an account of what you did with it. There is not an hour since you began to understand right from wrong for which you will not have to give an account to God! If there were nothing but time entrusted to our stewardship, here is room, indeed, for heart-searching and close reckoning!

"Give an account of your stewardship," next, as to *your talents*. We all vary in our natural gifts and in our acquirements. One has the tongue of eloquence, another has the pen of a ready writer and a third has the artistic eye that discerns beauty. But, whichever of these gifts we may

have, they belong to God and ought to be used in His service. Some have only such gifts as qualify them to earn their daily bread by manual labor—they have but little mental power—yet, for that little they must give an account and also for the physical strength with which God has blessed them. There is no person here without a talent of some sort or other. There is no one individual here without some form of power either given by nature or acquired by education. We are all endowed, in some degree or other, and we must, each one, give an account for that talent. What an account must some give who have been endowed with 10 talents, but have wasted them all!

What must be the account rendered by a Napoleon? What must be the reckoning given in by a Voltaire, with all the splendor of his intellect laid at the feet of Satan and desecrated to the damnation of mankind? Yet, while you think of these great ones of the earth, do not forget yourselves! What has been your special gift? You can speak well enough in some companies—have you ever spoken for Christ? You can write well, you judge that you have no mean gift in that direction—has your pen ever written a line that will bring your fellow men to the service of the Savior? What? Having 10 talents, are they all wrapped up in napkins, or all used for *self*, and none employed for God, for holiness, for the Truth of God, for righteousness? How sternly does the command come to you, "Give an account of your stewardship." Yet I am afraid that we cannot, any of us, give an account of our talents without fear and trembling!

Next, give an account of *your substance*. We vary greatly as to our temporal circumstances, I suppose there are a few present to whom God has entrusted great wealth, more to whom He has given considerable substance and that to the most of us He has given somewhat more than is absolutely necessary for our actual needs. But whether it is much or little, we must give an account for it all! I do not know what some rich professors will have to say concerning that which they give to the cause of God. It is no tithe of their substance—it is, as it were, but the cheese parings and the candle ends—and these they only give for the sake of appearance because it would not look respectable if they were altogether to withhold them! The Church's coffers would never be as empty as they are if it were not that some of the stewards in the Church are not faithful to their trust.

It is very sad to think of some of the great men in our own country who have incomes which, in a single month, would furnish a competent support for an entire family during their whole lives! I wonder what sort of reckoning theirs will be when they have to give an account of hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds? With some of them, all that they can say will be, "So much lost on the racetrack, so much spent upon a paramour, so much paid for diamonds, so much squandered in this form of waste and so much in that." But for the poor and needy, who are perishing in our streets, the multitudes who crave even necessary bread—some of them have done nothing at all! There are grand exceptions, names that shall live as long as philanthropy is prized among mankind, but the exceptions are so terribly few that when the rich men of England are indicted at the bar of God, as they certainly will be, the

account of their stewardship will be a truly terrible one! Yet what are you, and what am I, to judge thus, if we cannot say that we have been faithful with our little? I ask you if you have and I pray you to make a reckoning in your mind, now, of your stewardship of the gold, or the silver, or the copper with which God has entrusted you.

We must give an account, in the next place, of *our influence*. Everybody has some kind of influence. The mother who never leaves the nursery has a wondrous influence over those little children of hers, though no neighbor feels the force of her influence and no one but her own little ones are affected by her faithfulness. And who knows but that she is pressing to her bosom, perhaps a Whitefield who will thunder out the Gospel through the length and breadth of the land or perhaps, on the other hand, an infidel, whose dreadful blasphemies shall ruin multitudes? There is an influence that the mother has for which she must give an account to God! And the father's influence—oh, Fathers, you cannot shake off your obligations to your children by sending them to school, whether to a Sunday school or a boarding school! They are your children and you must give an account of your stewardship concerning your own offspring!

Yes, and even the nurse girl, though she seems of small note in the commonwealth, yet she, also, has an influence over her little charge which she must use for Christ. Not only he who thrills a senate with his oratory, but he who speaks a word from the carpenter's bench—each has his influence and each must use it—and give an account of it. Not merely the man who, by refusing to lend his millions, could prevent the horrors of war, but the man who with a smile might help to laugh at sin, or with a word of rebuke might show that he abhorred it. There is no one of you without influence and I ask you, now, how you have used it? Has it always been on the side of the Lord? "Give an account of your stewardship," for that influence will not always last.

We might pass on to consider all the other things that God has entrusted to us, but time would fail us. So I will remind you, my dear Friends, with much affection, that the account which you will have to render and which I ask you to render now, is *not an account concerning other people*. Oh, how nice it would be if we had to do that! Would it not? With what gusto some would undertake the task if they had to give a report upon other people's characters! How easily each of us can play the detective upon our fellows! How ready we are to say of this man, "Oh, yes, he gives away a good deal of money, but it is only out of ostentation." Or of that woman, "Yes, she appears to be a Christian, but you do not know her private life." Or of that minister of the Gospel, "Yes, he is very zealous, but be makes a good thing out of his ministry." We like thus to reckon up our fellow creatures and our arithmetic is wonderfully accurate, at least, so we think!

But when other people cast *us* up according to the same rule, the arithmetic seems terribly out of order and we cannot believe it to be right! Ah, but at the Great Judgment we shall not be asked to give an account for others, neither will I ask any of you, now, to be thinking about the conduct of others. What if others are worse than you are, does that

make you the better, or the less guilty? What if others are not all they seem to be, perhaps neither are you! At any rate, their hypocrisy shall not make *your* pretense to be true! Judge yourselves, that you be not judged! Let each man thrust the lancet into his own wound and see to the affairs of his own soul—for each one must give account of himself to God.

Remember, too, that *you are not called upon to give an account to others*. Alas, there are many people who seem to live only that they may win the esteem of their fellows! There is somebody to whom we look up to—if we do but have that somebody's smile, we think all is well. Perhaps some here are broken-hearted because that smile has vanished and they have been misjudged and unjustly condemned. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgement—and who is he that judges another man's servant? To his own master, the servant shall stand or fall, and not to this interloping judge! My dear Friends, when the opinion of one leans this way, and of another the other way—when we see public opinion to be as restless and changing as the vane upon the Church steeple swinging round with every wind that blows—we may well bid defiance to it all and thank God that the last bar is not swayed by the follies of the times, and that the Great Judge will not give His verdict according to the whimsies of an hour, but according to the rule of absolute equity!

Yet remember that if it is hard to be judged of man, it will be still sterner to be judged of God! If, weighed even in the balances of men, some of us are found wanting, how shall we bear to be put into the unerring scales adjusted by the Divine hand, to be judged by Him who cannot err—and to have our destiny fixed for *all eternity*—either in Heaven or in Hell? Remember this, my dear Hearer, and be ready to give an account of your stewardship—not to your fellow creature—but to the great Creator and Judge of all!

Remember also, dear Friends, that the account to be rendered will be from every man, *from every man, personally, concerning himself.* And whatever another man's account may be, it will not affect him. Some men will not have been any better than others of you have been. Yet if you perish as they perish, a numerous company will not make Hell any the cooler! If some men shall have been worse than others of you have been, it certainly will not diminish your punishment if you know that their doom is heavier than your own! Forget, for a while, that there are any other men in the world, and stand individually and separately before those awful eyes which are searching you through and through—for God will judge each of you as if there were no other men to judge—and read your inmost heart as if He had not another object to look upon! Give an account, then, of your stewardship. God grant us Grace to give, on each of these separate items that I have mentioned, an honest statement not only to our own conscience, but to Him who is the Judge of all!

II. Now, for a few minutes, let us examine SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD AT ONCE GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP.

It was a maxim of Pythagoras that each of his disciples should, every eventide, give a record of the actions of the day. I think it is well to do so, for we cannot too often take a retrospect of the past. But since, perhaps,

some of you may have been lax in this duty, let me remind you that *we have come, as it were, to the eventide of the year* and it seems to be most suitable that before we cross into another year of Grace, we should, in our heart and conscience, take stock and give an account of our stewardship.

Sit down a while, Pilgrim! Sit down a while. Here is the milestone marked with the end of another year—sit down upon it, put your hand to you brow and think! And lay your hand upon your heart and search and see what is there. This last Sabbath evening in the year is a most fitting time for giving this account and I ask you to use it in making up the account which you have to present before God. And if you feel unwilling to do it, I shall the more earnestly press you to do it! There are no persons who so dislike to look into their account books as those who are insolvent. Those who keep no books, when they come before the court, are understood to be rogues of the first water—and men who keep no mental memoranda of the past and bring up no recollections with regard to their sins, having tried to forget them all—may depend upon it that they are deceiving themselves! If you dare not search your hearts, I am afraid there is a reason for that fear and that, above all others, you ought to be diligent in this search.

Permit me to remind you that *if all should be wrong with you, it is best for you to know it*. It is only the most reckless seaman who would rather not know whether there is a rock in the course that he is sailing. O Sirs, are you like the ostrich that, having covered its head in the sand, and shut its eyes to the hunter, thinks it is all secure? I pray you, seek to know the worst of your case! It seems to me that any honest and sane man would want to do this. There is nothing a wise man hates more, when he is sick, than to have a doctor attending him who will always, if he can, give a flattering report, but will never speak the truth about his patient. Let not your heart flatter you any longer, but say to it, "My Soul, make out an honest account! See what and where you are and whether you are God's servant or not, doing as God would have you do."

Believer in Christ, it will be well for you to make out this account because you will find that *it will help you to prize your Savior more*. I never look into my own heart without first feeling shame and, afterwards, feeling greater love to Him who has eternally loved such a sinner as I am! I am sure it will drive you to your knees if you honestly search your own lives. There is enough in the history of a single week to make you prize your Redeemer more than ever if you fully realize the guilt of that one week and the greatness of His Grace in pardoning it! O Christian, if you would be driven nearer to your Lord, search and see, confess, repent and seek forgiveness. Go again to the Cross because you have again felt the burden of the sin that nailed your Savior there!

And, ungodly man, I press you, also, to give an account of your stewardship because, *perhaps, the same result may come to you*. If you find that you cannot give so good an account as you thought you could when you were wrapped up in self-righteousness, perhaps you may be alarmed and dismayed when you see the true state of the case—and it may be that God the Holy Spirit will lead you to say, "I will go to Jesus, for I am

undone without Him. I will hasten to His Cross, for I need the pardon that His blood has bought. I will now go with the language of confession on my lips and beseech Him to accept me before another year begins." It seems such a long time since I have talked to some of you. Tossing to and fro upon my bed, suffering great pain, I have thought that those of you to whom I have preached, now, these many years, will have to give an account of every address that I have delivered to you and of every exhortation with which I have plied you. I beseech you, seek to make that account at once to your God in private and ask Him to humble you, and to draw you sweetly to trust His dear Son, that you may be saved!

I cannot bear the thought that any of you should be lost! I had hoped that those who have supplied my place during my illness might, perhaps, have been guided to shoot the arrow more directly than I can shoot it. One thing I know, there was not among them all, whoever they might be, one who more anxiously desired that you might find the Savior than I do! And I pray at this moment, since I shall never preach to you again on another Sabbath of this year, that this night may be the last one you will spend in sin—and that tomorrow may be a spiritual birthday to you, the first day in which you shall rejoice in a Savior! No, that *this very night you may be born again* and become a new creature in Christ Jesus!

III. And now, lastly, let us consider THE REASON WHICH THE MASTER GIVES—"Give an account of your stewardship, *for you may no longer be steward.*"

This may happen in various ways. It may be that some here may live for years and yet no longer be stewards. A preacher may be laid aside, his voice gone, his mental faculties weakened—he is "no longer steward." One is thankful to have further opportunities of serving the Lord and trying to bring sinners to the Savior. O my dear Brother, work for God while you can! It is one of the bitterest regrets a man can know, to lie on his bed, to be unable to speak and to think to himself, "I wish I could preach that sermon over again. I did not drive that nail home with all the force I ought to have used! I have not been earnest enough in pleading with sinners! I have not wrestled, even to agony, over the salvation of their souls." It may be possible, my dear Brother Minister, that you and I may have 20 or 30 years of being laid aside from active service. Then let us work while we can, before the night comes when no man can work! Brother, let us seize the oar of the lifeboat and row out over the stormy sea, seeking to snatch the drowning ones from yonder wreck, for the time may come when our strong right arm shall be palsied and when we can do no more!

Yes, and rich professors may have to give an account of their stewardship and no longer be stewards. There were some of that kind when the recent financial panic came—though they had much *before* the crash, they had nothing left afterwards so they could no longer be stewards of the wealth that had been taken from them! It must be a cause of deep regret to men in that position if they cannot give a good account of their stewardship because they have done but little good with their wealth while they had it. And think, Sirs, you to whom God has given great possessions, how soon He may take them from you, for riches abide not for-

ever. Behold, they take to themselves wings and fly away! I know of no better way of clipping their wings than by giving generously to the cause of God and using in His service all that you can. It would be a subject for continual regret to you, I am sure, if you came down to poverty, not so much that you had descended in the social scale, for that you could bear if it came by mere misfortune through the Providence of God—but if you felt, "I did not do what I should have done when I had wealth"—that would be the arrow which would pierce you to the heart! It may be so, dear Brothers and Sisters, it may be so with some of you. At any rate, I feel that there are some of you who are poor because God will not lend His money where He knows that it will be locked up and not put out to good interest in His cause. What little you have is all hidden away, so the Lord will not trust you with more! He sees you are not fit to be one of His stewards. There are some, on the other hand, whom God has entrusted with much because He sees that they use it wisely in promoting the interests of His Kingdom.

But, after all, to every man, whether he is rich, or whether he is in the office of the ministry, *there may be a close of his stewardship before he dies*. The mother has her little children swept away, one after another. This is the message to her, "You may no longer be steward." The teacher has his class scattered, or he is, himself, unable to go to the school. The word to him, also, is, "You may no longer be steward." The man who went to his work, who might have spoken to his fellow workman, is removed, perhaps, to another land, or he is placed in a position where his mouth is shut. Now he can no longer be steward. Use all opportunities while you have them! Catch them on the wing! Serve God, while you can, today! Today! Today! Today! Let each golden moment have its pressing service rendered unto God, lest it should be said to you, "You may no longer be steward."

But we shall soon no longer be stewards in another sense. *The hour must come for us to die*. Out of our large congregation we have constant reminders that those who have served us as a Church and have served God faithfully in His Church, cannot abide with us forever. One or another, whom we have loved and honored, gives his account and passes to his rest. So will it be in turn with the pastor, with the deacons and with the elders. Do not put away the thought of that day, my fellow workers, as though you were immortal! It may come to us all of a sudden—no gray hairs may cover our heads—but while we are yet in the full strength of manly vigor, you or I may be called to give our account! What do you think? What do you think? Could you gather up your feet in the bed and look into eternity without feeling the cold sweat of fear stand upon your brow?

What do you think? Could you face the great Judgment Seat and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? Oh, God be praised if we are able to say that! What monuments of mercy will you and I be if we are able to say this at the close of our service—and to hear

our Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord."

My fellow member, by the fact that God is continually removing from us one and another, I ask you to remember that you, also, will soon depart. Therefore, be making up your account. Rest in Christ more confidently! Love God more earnestly! Serve your generation more intensely! Live while you live—play not at living, but live in real earnest—and let it never be said of you that you trod so lightly on the sands of time that you left no footprints there! Make your mark upon your age and fill your appointed place, as God shall help you, that when you are gathered to your fathers, you may not be forgotten, but the Church may remember you because in her midst there are children born to God through your means!

As for the unconverted here, need I tell them that they must soon depart and no longer be stewards? You must go from your business, O Trader. You must go from your merchandise, O Merchant. You must go from your bench, O Artisan. You must go from your machine, O Engineer. You must each depart and go to that place from which no traveler returns. Be ready! Be ready! I will ring the alarm for some of you—perhaps my text is a prophecy meant for some man here—"Give an account of your stewardship, for you may no longer be steward." You have had children about you and you have taught them blasphemy and drunkenness! Or you have had workmen in your employ and you have laughed at their religion, or aided and abetted them in sin! You have had talent, but you have used that talent in the service of the Evil One! You have had gold, but you have lavished it upon wantonness!

Now give an account of it all! Ah, Sirs, you may not heed what I say, but you will have to heed what will be said to you at another time! You will see this matter in another light when the death angel shall put his cold, freezing hand upon your shoulder and say to you, "Give an account! Give an account! Give an account of your stewardship!"

O Savior, Son of God, put Your pierced hands on these blind souls and give them light that they may be able to render up their account with joy, and not with grief! Give them Grace to believe in Your name and trust in Your atoning Sacrifice, for this is the way of salvation! O poor Sinners, trust in Christ Jesus and Him Crucified! You cannot be saved by your stewardship, any of you, but unfaithful stewardship will ruin you! Christ Crucified is your only hope of salvation! Look unto Him and live! Oh, look unto Him now! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:13-44.

Verses 13, 14. *And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?* Our Lord was a Judge and a Divider, but His sphere of action was *spiritual*—He did not interfere in the personal disputes of those who gathered round Him.

15. *And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.* Christ took advantage of this man's request and made it the text for a sermon against covetousness.

16-19. *And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* Notice how fond the rich man was of the little pronouns, "I," and, "my." He lived only for himself and was an embodiment of that covetousness which our Lord abhorred and denounced! What a vivid contrast there is between what the man said to himself and the Lord's message to him!

20. *But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided?* This may also be said to any of you—where would you be if the Lord said to you, "This night your soul shall be required of you"?

21-23. *So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.* Do not spend your care on the lower things—care most for that which is most worth caring for—more for the body than for raiment, more for life than for meat, and consequently, more for the *immortal spirit* than for anything besides—and more for God, even, than for your own soul! Let your cares be rated according to their objectives—to set a caring, anxious care upon the lesser things will be folly, indeed!

24. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouses nor barns and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls?* It seems, then, that those that are fed by God are much better fed than those that are fed by men! The ravens know no care, whatever, for God cares for them. And if we could ever bring our hearts into such a condition that we felt that everything to do with us was in God's hands, we should enter into a blessed, hallowed freedom from care in which we should find a sweet repose of spirit—

"Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed.
And He who feeds the ravens,
Will give His children bread."

25, 26. *And which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? If you, then, are not able to do that thing which is least, why take you thought for the rest?* It would be a very small matter to you if you were a foot taller, or if you were a foot shorter. It is not that the making of yourself a cubit taller or shorter would be a small thing to do, but it is a small thing in its result—it is an inconsiderable matter whether a man is tall or short. If you, then, are not able, even, to reduce your stature, or to increase it, take no anxious thought about other things!

27. *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* So that God cares not only for things that have necessities, as ravens have, but for things that have luxuries, as lilies have! When God does anything, He does it well. He is a grand Housekeeper! He does not measure out so many ounces of bread per diem, as if we were in a workhouse, but, "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." The lilies might do as well without their golden hues. They might ripen their seed without the lengthened stems that lift them where they can be observed, but God takes more care of them, even, than Solomon did of himself, for, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Now, dear children of God, if you trust your Heavenly Father, He will see that you have no cause for care. If you trust Him with your souls, He will not give you a bare salvation, but a rich robe of righteousness to cover all your nakedness! When He does any work, He does it after a better fashion than the wisest of men could do it and, Nature herself, working as she does for the lilies, is only God working in another way! But when God, Himself, without the intervention of the laws of Nature, works in the Kingdom of His Grace, He does it perfectly—He does it gloriously!

28. *If, then, God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?* Your life is not like that of the grass, or the flower of the field that fades on a summer's day. God will take care of you and the everlasting things shall have from Him a care greater than He gives to the temporal. Yet how much God really does for flowers—flowers that only open their cups in the morning and shut them in death at night! How much of skill and wisdom there is, even, about them! Shall there not be greater skill and wisdom employed upon *you* who, when you have once begun to bloom in the Light of God, shall go on blooming, flowering and shedding your perfume throughout the endless ages?

29, 30. *And seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind. For all these things in the nations of the world seek after and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* For you, the immortal, the twice-born, the very bodyguard of Christ—to live for such things as the men of the world live for is to degrade the peerage of Heaven—to bring those who are of the blood royal of the skies down to a gross pursuit! No, let your whole thought, heart and life be spent for something higher and better than these things—and leave the lower cares with your Father!

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* When Abraham had many sons, he gave to each one of them a portion and sent them away. But Isaac had the family heritage. It is the same with you! The Lord may give to others more than He bestows upon you in this life, but for you He reserves the Kingdom! Are you not content with that, whatever else your Father gives you or withholds from you?

33. *Sell what you have and give alms.* That is to say, do not merely give a little which you can readily spare, but sometimes even pinch yourselves to relieve the poor!

33, 34. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be, also.* You are sure to live for that which is the choicest object of your love. Whatever you think to be first, *will be first*—and what you love in your heart, you will be sure to follow in your life.

35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately.* Many people are thinking just now of Christ's First Advent—but this passage bids us watch for His glorious Second Coming.

37. *Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* I never read this verse without wondering at the marvelous condescension of our Lord! Even in the day of His appearing in Glory, His thoughts will be more about His people than about Himself—"He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

38. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.* We cannot tell when He will come, but, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find watching."

39-44. *And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broke into. Be you, therefore, ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not. Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speak You this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say onto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has.* Wonderful words! We cannot at present tell all that they mean, but, by God's Grace, may they be fulfilled to us when our Lord comes to take us to Himself!

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.

END OF VOLUME 41