CARTE BLANCHE
NO. 2446

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 20, 1890.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will." Matthew 15:28.

I mean to dwell Especially upon those words at the end of the verse, "Be it unto you even as you will," but before we consider them, I should like to remind you again, as I did in the reading, that our Lord admired this woman's faith. He said unto her, "O woman, great is your faith." She was humble, she was patient, she was persevering, she was affectionate towards her child, but our Savior did not mention any of these things, for He was most of all struck by her *faith*. What other good things she had sprang out of her faith, so the Lord Jesus went at once to the root of the matter and, as it were, held up His hands in astonishment and exclaimed, "O woman, great is your faith." Her faith really was great, extremely great, when you consider that she was a Gentile and one of a race that had, ages before, been doomed. The Canaanite race was one in whose nature idolatry seemed to be ingrained, yet this woman showed that she had greater faith than many a Jew!

There are two cases of extraordinary faith recorded in the early part of Matthew's Gospel—and in both of these instances where our Savior expressed His astonishment at the greatness of the faith, the believers were Gentiles. Of the centurion at Capernaum He said, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel." It is a wonderful thing when persons who have lived in ignorance and vice exhibit great faith. We are glad when those who have been brought up religiously and morally are led to believe in Christ, but we are often more astonished when the immoral—those who have previously known nothing of true godliness—are enabled by Divine Grace to exercise great faith in Christ. "O woman, great is your faith," said our Lord, for it was great even apart from her being a Gentile, for it had been sorely tried. Trials of faith from disciples are often very severe, but the disciples had put her aside and even besought their Lord to, "Send her away."

But trials of faith from the Master, Himself, are still more severe. To have Christ's deaf ear and dumb lips—this was a trial, indeed, and worse than that, to have rough words from such a loving and tender Teacher as

He was, and even to be called a dog by the great Shepherd of Israel and to be told that it was not right to give her the children's bread—these were heavy tests of her confidence! But she had such faith that she bore up under all and still pressed her suit with the Son of David, the Lord of Mercy! We cannot but feel that Christ did her justice when He said, "O woman, great is your faith."

Our Savior seems to have been especially struck with the *ingenuity* of her faith. Little faith always lacks ingenuity—it must have everything very plain or else it cannot move at all. But great faith makes crooked things straight, sees light in the midst of darkness and gathers comfort out of discouragement! For this woman to turn Christ's word inside out, as it were, and when He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs," for her to say, in effect, "I do not ask to have it cast to me—only let me have the *crumbs* which fall by accident from the children, themselves, when they have brought the dogs under the table"—this was, indeed, extraordinary faith and wonderful pleading. "If You will heal my daughter, there will be none the less of Your marvelous power for the children of Israel, for You can heal them, too. If You grant me this that I ask—great as it is to *me*, it is only like a crumb to You—Your table is so lavishly provided for by Your Grace. Even this great favor that I ask of You will be nothing more to You than a chance crumb that falls from the children's table." This was splendid pleading and the Savior saw the force of it at once. He loves ingenuity on the part of those who come to Him. He is so ingenious, Himself, in devising means of bringing back His banished ones, that He is glad to see ingenuity in the banished ones, themselves, when they desire to come back to Him. He therefore cries in holy astonishment, "O woman, great is your faith!"

Taking the case of the woman as a whole, I think that it must have been her pertinacity, her firmness, that surprised the Lord. Others are easily put off, but she would not be put off. Others need encouragement, but she encouraged herself. When the door is shut in her face, she only knocks at it—and when Christ calls her, "Dog," she only picks up what Christ has said, as a good dog will pick up his master's stick, and brings it right to His feet! There was no baffling her. If all the devils in Hell had been about the business, not merely that terrible one that possessed her daughter, she would have beaten them all, for she had such faith—shall I not say—such *dogged* faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that she could even get comfort out of being called a dog! She had such resolute faith that she must have what she sought and she would not go away without it. If she does not succeed at first, she will battle on until she does win the victory! She will continue pleading till she carries her suit.

Our Lord was not only, to speak after the manner of men, astonished at her faith, but, with reverence we may say that He was conquered by it. He yielded to her faith and He yielded unconditionally. He gave her much more than she asked, for she had not asked that her daughter might be healed the same hour. She had hardly got as far as the asking at all and,

as to mentioning the details, she had only pleaded with Him in general. But Christ gave her definitely what He knew she wished for and gave it to her at once! And, what is more, He did, as it were, hand her over the keys of His house. "There," He said, "My good woman, I so admire your faith that I say to you, Go and help yourself! You may have whatever you like. Whatever treasure of Grace I have is yours if you want it—be it unto you even as you will." He gave her the keys of the heavenly vault!

Some time ago, a lady wishing to help the Orphanage, sent me a check and she did a very unwise thing, indeed, for she signed the check, but she did not fill in the amount. Never do that! You see, I might have put all her fortune down and made out the check for any amount that the lady had in the bank. She evidently trusted me very largely, but I sent her check back to her saying that I did not know what amount to put down. Of course, she intended to give a guinea, or £5, or something of the kind, but she forgot to say how much—and that is a very dangerous plan, indeed, with most people. So our Savior gave this woman a blank check. "Make it out for whatever amount you like," He said. "Great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will. Whatever it is that you wish for, you shall have. Your faith has won from Me this gift that I now put at your disposal all My power to bless. Be it unto you even as you will."

I am going to talk especially about that point, and first I will try to answer the question, *How far did this carte blanche extend?* Then, secondly, *when is it safe for the Lord to give such a cart blanche as that?* And, thirdly, *if He did give us such power, how would we use it?*

I. First, then, dear Friends, HOW FAR DID THIS CARTE BLANCHE EXTEND when the Savior said to the woman, "Be it unto you even as you will"?

In answer to which I would say, first, that it went so far as *to baffle all the powers of Hell.* This woman's child was grievously vexed with a devil and we read, "her daughter was made whole from that very hour." "For this saying, go your way," said Christ, according to Mark's account, "the devil is gone out of your daughter." Now Satan is very mighty—there is not one of us, nor all of us put together who can be equally matched with him! He takes small account of 10,000 men—he is more crafty and cunning than all the wise men and more powerful than all the mighty men who ever came together—and yet the Savior seems to say, "I have heard you, good woman, I have seen your faith. I will rebuke the demon, I will send the evil spirit back to his own place and your child shall be snatched out of his cruel grasp."

Beloved, if you have faith enough, Christ will give you power, even, to cast out devils! If you can only trust Him—trust Him without measure or stint and believe in Him as this woman did—He will give you power to make Satan fall like lightning from Heaven and flee before you. "Jesus I know," said the evil spirit at Corinth, "and Paul I know"—and the devil still knows those who make him know them! Through faith in Jesus they speak to him with authority and he must flee from them. So, if you have

faith, you shall resist the devil and even he, powerful as he is, shall turn his back and flee from you! And, as Luther said, though there were as many devils as the tiles upon the housetops, yet would faith in God give you Grace to vanquish them all! Remember that glorious promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." So this *carte blanche*, when He said to the woman, "Be it unto you even as you will," meant, "The devils, themselves, are now subject to your will."

Next, it meant that it was the will of the Lord *to heal her daughter completely.* She had come all the way from Syrophoenicia to the borders of the land of Israel that she might plead with Christ about her daughter, her dear child, perhaps her only child. This sorrow pressed very heavily on her heart, so she cried unto the Lord, "Have mercy on me." She so identified *herself* with her child that she did not know any difference between herself and her child! They had seemed to grow into one in the great trouble that they had at home. I have known many a mother who certainly would far rather have suffered, herself, than that her child should suffer, so completely had she identified herself with her child.

Now, Beloved, if you can plead with Christ with this woman's heroic faith. If you can fully believe in Him and not dare to doubt Him, you shall have your children put at your disposal. He will deal graciously with them—with the girl for whom you are pleading, with the boy over whom your heart is aching. He will say to you, dear mother, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will." The boy shall repent, the girl shall believe, the children shall come to Jesus' feet and become your comfort and joy through their early conversion to Christ. Is not this a great blessing?

Yes, and the woman had such faith in Christ that this blank check further meant her *to have this gift at once*. "Be it unto you even as you will, now, at once." So she willed at once, of course, that the devil should go out of her daughter—and out the devil had to go, for her will had become *God's* will, and Christ had infused into her will a mighty power which even Satan could not resist! Oh, if you have faith enough, you may get the blessing you desire even now! It may be that while sitting in this Tabernacle, breathing a prayer for your child, God may bless your child before you get home! If you can but have faith enough, He has power enough—and if He deigns to say, "Be it unto you even as you will," I know that it will be your will—not that your girl may be converted when she becomes a woman, not that your boy may be saved when he becomes a man—but that the blessed miracle may be worked at once, even now! What parents want to let the devil have their children even for an hour? O Jesus, turn him out at once! Let us see our children, our children's children, our brothers and sisters and friends converted *now*, for while now is the accepted time with God, now is the time which every earnest Christian will prefer for the conversion of those for whom he prays. A splendid promise is this concerning great blessings to be had and to be had at once—"Be it unto you even as you will."

I must go a little further and say that I think our Lord, when He said to the woman, "Be it unto you even as you will," permitted her *to eat the children's bread.* She had said before, "The little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table"—and, "then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will." I think this means that instead of having the privilege to go and roam like a dog under the table and eat only what she could pick up, she was made into a child and was permitted to sit at the table, and eat of all that the Lord had provided! O poor Sinner, you came in here, tonight, feeling like a whipped dog, did you not? You said to yourself, "There will not be anything for me in the sermon." But, by-and-by, as you heard of the great Grace of Christ to this poor woman, you thought that there *might* be hope even for *you.* And now you begin to think that there is a possibility that even *you* may be blessed!

Well, well, I venture to say to you that if you wish to eat the children's bread, you may! "Be it unto you even as you will." Lord, we do not ask of You that we may be treated better than the rest of Your family! If any of you pray to God to make a distinction and to give you more than He gives His other children, I do not think you are likely to get it. If you come to Christ as Mrs. Zebedee did and begin asking that James and John may sit, the one at His right hand, and the other at His left, you will not get what you ask. But if you say, "O Lord, You are my God. I love Your people—let me fare as they do. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. I do not ask to be exempt from tribulation, for all the heirs of salvation have to endure it. I only ask that I may eat what Your children eat. If they have bread, Lord, I will be happy to have bread. I ask for no dainties. If they drink water from the rock, Lord, let me have a draft of the same—I ask for nothing more." Jesus says, "Be it unto you even as you will. If you are content to sit at the table with My children, come along with you. If you sigh after their bread which came down from Heaven—if you will take 'scot and lot' with them, there is nothing to hinder you. Be it unto you even as you will."

Surely, also, when the Savior spoke thus to the Syrophenician woman, He meant to make reference to her first prayer. She cried unto Him, saying, "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David."* "Yes," He said, "now be it unto you even as you will. I have mercy on you. If you have sinned, I forgive you. If you are hard of heart, I will soften your heart. If you have been an ignorant heathen, I will enlighten you and bring you to My feet. I will be to you the Son of David and you shall be one of My own chosen people, and I will care for you, and protect you, and deliver you, as David did the many for whom he fought."

O Souls, if any of you are crying, "Lord have mercy upon me"—If you have faith in Christ—and He deserves to be trusted, for there is none like He! He deserves to be trusted without a single doubt, for He never failed anyone and He never lied to anyone. Therefore let no wicked mistrust come in to weaken your faith—if *you* can trust Him, He says to you, "Be

it unto you even as you will." Take mercy! Take mercy and more mercy, and yet more mercy! Come to the Table of Love and sit among the children of the Lord and feed on heavenly bread! Put up your prayer for your child, pleading the promise to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, *and your house*."

Come to Christ with all the torment you have felt from the devil's possession of you—the horrible thoughts, the blasphemous insinuations, the desperate doubts—and hear the Savior say to you, "Be it unto you even as you will." The devil shall be made to depart from you. Your poor head shall lose the fever from the burning brow. Your heart shall beat at its even pace and you shall be at peace again. The Lord shall rebuke your adversary. In this confidence, say unto the demon even now, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise."

Oh, this is a grand, grand word from our Lord's lips! It is a wonderful check, signed by our Savior's own hand, and left blank for faith to fill up! We might have half thought that He would have said, "O woman, your faith is too big for Me to trust you with unlimited prayer. If you had only a little faith, I would go as far as your little faith would go and keep pace with you." But no, no! That is not Christ's method of acting. He says, "O woman, great is your faith and as you can trust *Me*, I can trust *you*. Cry as you will, for so be it unto you. You have firmly resolved to have no doubt about My power and willingness, and to trust Me without reserve. so I trust you without reserve—be it unto you even as you will."

II. So now I pass to our second question, which is this—WHEN IS IT SAFE FOR THE LORD TO TRUST ANYBODY WITH SUCH A PROMISE AS THIS, "Be it unto you even as you will"?

It would be very unsafe to trust some of you thus. Why, there is one man here who, if it were said to him, "Be it unto you even as you will," would at once pray for—well, I do not know how many thousand pounds—but when he got home, he would be discontented and say, "What a fool I was not to ask for two or three times as much!" Ah, yes, yes, yes! But the Lord does not trust greedy people in that way. Not while there is any idea of your own merit left, will Christ trust you at all! Not while there is a fraction of self-will left, will Christ trust you at all. And not while doubt remains. That must go, for the whole verse says, "O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will." He trusts *faith*. He will not trust unbelief, he will not trust self-confidence, he will not trust human merit—but where there is faith, there He gives the keys of His treasury and says, "Be it unto you even as you will."

When will the Lord thus trust us? Well, I think, first, *when we agree with Christ*—when we are like this woman who had no quarrel with the Savior. Whatever He said was right in her eyes. If He called her a dog, she said, "Truth, Lord." When you and Christ agree and there is no quarrel between you, then He says, "Be it unto you even as you will." If you do not yield to Him, He will not yield to you. But when you just end all disputing and say, "Lord, I have done with all quibbling and quarrelling. I

will never raise another question and never harbor another doubt. I believe You. I believe You. As a child believes its mother, I believe You. When I cannot understand You, when You distress me, still I believe You." Ah, when you come to *that* point, then the Lord will say, "Be it unto you even as you will."

Next, *when our soul is taken up with proper desires*. This woman had no idea of asking for a hundred thousand shekels of silver, or a wedge of gold, or a goodly Babylonian garment. Only one thought possessed her—"My child! My child! Oh, that the devil might be cast out of my child!" "Now," says Christ, "be it unto you even as you will." And when you have great desires for heavenly things—when your desires are such as God approves of—when you will what God wills, then you may will what you like! When it comes to this, that you have dropped your own desires of an inferior and groveling kind and you are taken up with desires for necessary things—desires that come to you from Christ, Himself. When you desire the bread, not from the devil's oven, but from Christ's table—when that is what you crave—then it shall be unto you even as you will.

Next, it shall be to us even as we will *when we see our Lord in His true office*. This woman saw that Christ was a Healer and she appealed to Him as a Healer. If you see Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, you may go and ask of Him as a Prophet what a Prophet is ordained to give, or as a Priest what a priest is intended to bestow, or as a King what a king is set upon the throne to do! You may go to Christ as He really is and if you see that He is ordained for this purpose and for that, then keep in tune with what He is ordained to be and you may ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. You must not try to take Christ away from His offices! Christ is not sent of God to make you a *rich* man—He is sent of God to make you a *saved* man. So you may go to Him as a Savior, for that is His office. You may go to Him as a Priest, for it is His office to cleanse, to offer sacrifice, to make intercession. Take Christ as God sets Him forth and then be it unto you even as you will.

Next, it will be to us even as we will *when we can believe about the distinct objective that is before us*. This woman pleaded for her child. All her faith went out towards her child. I love the prayer that has in it faith concerning the thing for which it pleads. There are many Christian people who say they have faith about 20 things, but then the thing that they cannot believe about is the twenty-first! You must have a faith that can not only cover 21 things, but that can cover *everything*! We say, "Oh, I could believe if my trouble were like So-and-So's!" You could not believe at all unless you can believe about your present trouble—and you must believe about the objective for which you are praying, that it can be given you, that it will be given you in answer to your prayer—and then Jesus will say to you, "Be it unto you even as you will."

Again, we can have whatever we like *when our heart seeks only God's Glory.* When what we pray for is not for wealth, nor with a desire for our own honor, but when even what we want for ourselves is asked with the

higher motive that God may be glorified in us by our obtaining such-and-such a gift, or being delivered from such-and-such a trial. When God's Glory is your one aim, you may ask what you will and it shall be given unto you.

And above all, when we always keep to what I have already mentioned, *when we only ask for the children's bread*, then the Lord will give us what we crave. If you ask for what God gives His elect, for what Christ has bought for His redeemed. If you ask for what the Holy Spirit works in the minds of men converted by His power. If you ask for what God has promised. If you ask for what it is customary for God to bestow upon His waiting people, then, "be it unto you even as you will." No wild fancy, no rhapsody, no whim that makes you wish for this or that, is worthy to come within the compass of my text. But that which the Lord waits to give you—that which He knows would be good for you, that which will be an honor to Him, and which will help you to honor Him—you may ask without any stammering or fear and you shall have it, for He says to you, "Be it unto you even as you will."

I do not know, but I think that I am speaking personally to somebody here in trouble, who has been long pleading and praying and has never got an answer yet. "Be it unto you even as you will." Hannah, the woman of a sorrowful spirit, sits in this house, bowed down in soul and pouring out before the Lord her silent prayer. Let her take this message from the Lord's servant, or, better still, from the Lord, Himself, "Be it unto you even as you will." But then I only dare to say it to one to whom I could *also* say, "O woman, great is your faith." If you have not any faith, how are you to have it? Here is a soup kitchen opened for the poor, and they are told to bring their jugs, their mugs, their basins—anything they like. A woman comes and says, "I have not a mug." "Have you a basin?" "No." Well, you say to her, "You can have the soup," but then, you see, she cannot carry it home without a basin, or a jug. So, here is the mercy of God and many lack it—here is a blessing rich and rare, and many cannot carry it home because they have no faith—but Christ could say to the Syrophenician, "O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will."

II. Now I finish by asking another question. Suppose this blank check to be given to us, HOW WILL IT BE USED?

Well, first, *I should use it upon that thing about which I have been praying most.* I will not say what it is. This woman had been praying most about her daughter, so, when the Savior said, "Be it unto you even as you will," she did not say a single word, but she just willed in her mind that the devil should be driven out of her daughter. Oh, that you might have faith enough to be able to will the right thing! If Christ leaves His own will in your hands and feels safe in doing so, oh, will strongly! It is for God, you know, to give a fiat, but Christ here gives a fiat to the woman! As I read the text, He says to her, "Be it unto you"—"So let it be." "Be it so," He says, "as you will." Behold, the fiat of God goes forth to you,

Believer, to let it be even as you will it to be! Now, can you not will for the child for whom you have been praying? Do you not will for the congregation that lies on your heart? Do you not will for that friend with whom you have been speaking in order to try to bring him to Christ? Will for the distinct objective for which you have been praying and then, may the will of the Lord be done and may your will also be done because it is an echo of the will of the Lord!

Next, I think that if we had this said to each one of us—"Be it unto you even as you will," *we should first will our own salvation.* Pray, as we sang just now—

"With my burden I begin Lord,
Remove this load of sin!
Let Your blood, for sinners spilt,
Let my conscience free from guilt.
Lord! I come to You for rest,
Take possession of my breast.
There Your blood-bought right maintain,
And without a rival reign."

Let each one of us pray, "Lord, save me! Lord, make sure work of it! Save me from sin, save me from self, save me from everything that dishonors You."

I was talking, the other day, with a man who was saying that he attended a ministry where he heard very little about holy living. He thought that he was a believer in Christ, though he was living in sin, and continued to live in sin. He knows, now, that he was no believer, or else he could not have lived in sin as he did. And now he prays to God, not for salvation while he is living in sin, but for salvation *from* sin. So, we will first ask of God our own full salvation, and we know that His answer will be, "Be it unto you even as you will."

Have we not all a prayer, also, *for our children, or our friends, or those who lie near to our hearts?* Then let us pray on with great faith till we hear Christ say, "Be it unto you even as you will." And then let us go home and expect to see the work of Divine Grace begun in our children! Watch for it, O parent, and carefully nurture it as soon as you see the first beginnings of it! About this matter, also, Jesus says, "Be it unto you even as you will."

I think that if I were asked to pray, now, for something very special, and that I might have whatever I asked, my prayer would be, "Lord, make me grow in Divine Grace. Give me more faith. If I have great faith, give me more. If I have much love to You, give me more love to You. If I know my Lord, I pray that I may know more of Him and know Him to a fuller and more intense degree." My prayer shall be—

"Nearer, my God, to You,
Nearer to You."

Let that be the prayer of each one of you to whom it is left to fill up this blank check!

Then there is another prayer that I am sure I would remember, if nobody else here did, and that would be *concerning Christ's Kingdom*. If it is to be unto me as I will, then I will it that God's Truth should be preached *everywhere*, and that false doctrines should be made to fly like chaff before the wind! If our prayer is heard and we are permitted to have what we will, our will is that God may send us Luthers and Calvins, and brave men like John Knox, again—men with bones in their backs and fire on their lips—with hearts that burn and words that glow with holy fervor! We need them so badly! The Lord have mercy upon the Free Church of Scotland and give her back faithful covenanting men and women! The Lord have mercy upon our own poor denomination and give us those who love the Truth of God and dare to stand up for it, come what may! Oh, for such a prayer as that! Lord, revive Your Church! Lord, lift up a banner because of Your Truth! Lord, put Your adversaries to the rout!—

"Fight for Yourself, O Jesus, fight,
The travail of Your soul regain!"

Oh, to hear in our hearts this gracious word from the King, Himself, as we plead with Him concerning His Kingdom, "Be it unto you even as you will."

By-and-by you and I shall lie sick and ill. And they will say, "His days are numbered." Then, if the Lord shall visit us in answer to our prayers and whisper to us, "Be it unto you even as you will," oh then the promise will read in a very different sense from what I can read it now! Then will the poor tent begin to be taken down—well, it never was worth much. Fearfully and wonderfully made is this mortal frame, but it is capable of bringing us great pain and much sorrow and, also, of deadening our devotion and hampering us in our work for God. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." "Ah, well," says the Lord, "you shall be rid of your flesh one day! It shall be unto you even as you will." You have sung, sometimes—

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

"Be it unto you even as you will."

A dear Sister who was buried today said, when they told her that she could not live another day, "Does it not seem wonderful? Is it not a grand thing to know that I am going to see the Lord Jesus Christ today?" And she lay on her bed saying this to all who came, "It seems too good to be true that I should be so near that for which I have longed these many years! I am going, today, to see the King in His beauty!"

Ah, thank God, we, too, shall come to that last day of our earthly life! Unless the Lord descends quickly, we, too, shall come to our dying bed and then we shall hear our Savior say, "Be it unto you even as you will," and oh, we shall will to see His face and to be forever with the Lord, and to praise Him with infinite rapture forever and ever! Blessed be His name! We have faith to believe that it will be even so. Then we will tell Him what

we cannot tell Him now—how much we love Him, how deeply we feel our indebtedness to Him—and we will give all the glory of our salvation to His holy name forever and ever! God grant that this may be the happy lot of everyone of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—327, 978, 980.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 15:21-28.

Verse 21. *Then Jesus went from there.* He was glad to get away from the scribes and Pharisees who had been disputing about such trifles as the washing of His disciples' hands. He was tired of the murmuring of these cantankerous, frivolous triflers.

21. *And departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* He felt that He would rather be with "sinners of the Gentiles" than with these Ritualistic and hypocritical Hebrews! He will get as far away from them as He well can. He will go, even, to the heathen, for among them He will be able to do His real business and not be trifled with.

22. *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts.* When sinners come to Christ, it is because Christ comes to them. Notice the two statements, how they coincide—Jesus "departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon," and this, "woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts"—and so they met. Oh, that there might be such a meeting here, tonight, between someone who has come from a long distance to meet Christ—and Christ who has come on purpose to meet that person!

22. *And cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* The devil had extraordinary power at that time, so that he possessed the bodies and minds of men. I am not certain that there are not instances of Satan's possession even now among us. There are cases that look very much like it, but in the Savior's day there were evidently singular and remarkable possessions of men and women by Satan. This poor mother says, "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

23. *But He answered her not a word.* Has the Savior become deaf and dumb? Will He not hear a suppliant cry? He heard her, but He said nothing.

23. *And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.* "She is a stranger and, as far as we can judge, she means to hang on until she gets what she wants. If you will not give it to her, bid her be gone, for she cries after *us*." One thing I notice that they said which was not true, "*She cries after us*." Not she! She never cried after *them*—she was crying after Christ—she would have pleaded in vain if she had cried after them, for all they had to say was, "Send her away." A very different result came from her crying unto the Lord!

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* As a Preacher and a Teacher, Christ came to adminis-

ter to the circumcision—the Jews, the seed of Israel. He did not go about among the nations—it was His work to be a witness to the Jews. As a Preacher, He must begin somewhere, and He chose to begin with them. "I am not sent," He said. And, therefore, how could He go if He was not sent? Our Savior had a greater regard to the *sending* of the Father than some preachers have, for they run *before* they are sent! Sometimes they run when they are never sent at all! But, as Paul asked, "How shall they preach, except they are sent?"

25. *Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me.* She takes a humbler attitude than she had at first assumed. She comes closer and she is more earnest and personal in her pleading than she had been—"Lord help me." Her prayer is shorter than it was at first and I think that, when prayers grow shorter, they grow stronger. There is often more proof of earnestness in a short prayer than there is in a long one—glibness of speech is not prevalence in intercession.

26, 27. *But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord.* You remember the sermon that we had upon this text not long ago. [Sermon #2129, Volume 36—*"Pleading, Not Contradiction"*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The woman did not contradict the Savior, she did not enter into any controversy with Him, but she said, "Truth, Lord." Whatever He says—however black the words may look to her—she accepts them as true and says, "Truth, Lord."

27. *Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* When the children drop crumbs. then the little dogs which have been fondled by the children feed on the crumbs which fall, not from "*the*" master's table, but from "their masters' table"—that is, from the table of the children.

28. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith.* He seems quite amazed at the woman's faith, but He admires it and exclaimed, "O woman, great is your faith."

28. *Be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* It was as she wished and she went home to glorify the Christ and to tell everybody how her prayer to Him had sped.

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"GOD, AND NOT MAN"— WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
NO. 2447

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 12, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 17, 1889.

"I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." Hosea 11:9.

THE Lord, speaking of Himself as, "God, and not man," mentions as the special point in which He is above and beyond man, that He has greater Grace, greater long-suffering, and greater willingness to forgive—"I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." In a thousand respects, God is greater than man! For us to enter into that theme would require a very considerable length of time, but the Lord, here, puts this Truth of God most prominently forward, that He is "God, and not man," in that He is infinitely more forbearing, infinitely more tender, infinitely more ready to pass by offenses than any man can ever be. What men cannot do by reason of the narrowness and shallowness of their goodness, God can and will do by reason of the height and depth and length and breadth of His immeasurable love!

Note that Truth in our text and then note another. When God can find in man no reason for showing mercy to him, He still finds a reason for displaying His mercy, for He looks for it in His own heart. He does not say, "I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for he is not as bad as he might be, and there is really something hopeful about him." No, the Lord does not let the bucket down into that dry well, but He fetches the argument for His mercy out of Himself—"For I am God." "It is not what he is, but what I am that decides the case," says Jehovah. "I will have mercy upon Ephraim because I am God, and not man." Guilty one, your hope of pardon lies in the Character of God! And the more quickly and completely you recognize this fact, the better will it be for you. Do not be looking into yourself to find some reason why God should have pity upon you, for there is no reason within you but what Satan can answer and overturn!

Rather look to God—especially as God looks to Himself—for your hope lies in what He is whom you have offended. I know that He is just and holy and that this Truth, at first, condemns you. But He is also good and gracious—and *this* Truth of God brings joy and brightness to you! The only rays of light you can ever get must come to you from the sun. You will not find any in your own eyes, for they are blind. It is from the sun that your very power to see, as well as the light by which you can see,

must come. So, God fetches His argument in favor of mercy from Himself! You have one specimen of it in that grand passage where He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," drawing the reasons for the display of His mercy out of the great deeps of His own Sovereignty.

Our text reveals this as God's reason, drawn from His own Nature, why He forgives men—"I am God, and not man." I have known a despondent soul often turn to this great Truth the wrong side out and find in it a reason for *despair* rather than for hope. "Look," says the awakened sinner, "if I had only offended against my fellow man, I would have some hope of pardon. But my sin is terrible because it is committed against high Heaven! It is with *God* that I have to deal and I can say with David, '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.'" It is because you have to deal with God, rather than with men, that some of you think you must be shut up to despair. That mistake of yours only shows what a poor, faulty guide unbelief is, for it turns your back to the Light of God and makes you walk on in darkness! Faith, on the other hand, argues after the manner of God and says, "If I had offended against *man*, I could not have expected him to forgive me. If I had injured man as I have injured God, I could not have hoped to be pardoned. But since I know that God is Love and that He is infinite in Grace, I see that there is a wondrous depth of sound reasoning about this Divine declaration, 'I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.'"

I am going to speak upon this one theme, to hammer away upon this one nail! There will be no great variety in my subject and no particular freshness of thought in considering it, but I shall dwell upon just this one Truth of God, that there is hope for guilty men! There is hope for every man, woman and child who will come and confess sin, and trust in Christ, on this ground—that He with whom we have to deal is, "God, and not man." This I shall have to show you at considerable length and under many particulars, but the whole purpose of my discourse will be to show you the *hopefulness* in this great Truth of God that, as sinners, we have to deal with God, and not with men!

I. For, first, MAN CANNOT LONG FORBEAR HIS ANGER.

I am not speaking, now, of certain passionate people who have no control over their tempers. Oh, dear, there are some persons whom I know whose blood seems to lie very close to the surface! It is soon up and very hot. With them it is, as men say, "a word and a blow." But sometimes it is the blow without even waiting for the word! They are so very irritable that any little offense puts them on the defensive, or makes them ready to attack others. They cannot bear anything that annoys them. Some, because they are so little and, as the proverb truly says, "A little pot is soon hot." And others because they think themselves so big that if anybody comes between the wind and their nobility, that person has committed an altogether unpardonable offense! Oh, dear, if we had to deal with a God who was like these men, we should have perished long, long ago!

But our text means even more than that. The Hebrew of this passage is very significant and expressive and it might be rendered thus—"I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not the best of men." For with even the best of men—the noble spirits who can bear a good deal more than ordinary individuals—yet there is still a point of forbearance beyond which they cannot and will not go. If you have offended them once, twice, thrice, it may be that they are patient with you and forgive you. But when the offense is repeated and the provocation is multiplied, even the best of men are apt to ask, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" He who put that question thought that he had gone a long way when he suggested sevenfold forgiveness! But the Savior said to Peter, "I say not unto you, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven." You remember what the Apostles said when they heard this saying? They prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." As much as to say, "It needs very great faith to be able to forgive an offender until seventy times seven."

We have offended against God far more often than seventy times seven, yet He has borne with us! We who are here are the living monuments of Divine Mercy and might truly write upon our brows, "Spared by the long-suffering of God," for if He had strictly marked our sin, He must have destroyed us and if He had even dealt with any one of us who has been unfruitful, He must have said, as did the owner of the fruitless fig tree, "Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?" But here is the mercy of our case—we have to deal with the God of Patience who is long-suffering and full of pity—who is, in fact, as our text declares—"God, and not man." This should make us bless His name continually for the great forbearance He has shown toward us. And this goodness, forbearance and long-suffering of God should lead us to repentance. We may not continue in sin because God's Grace abounds, but His abounding Grace should make us loathe and leave sin.

II. Next, if we had to deal, not with God, but with our fellow men, we would very often find that WHEN MEN GET INTO A LOW, NERVOUS, SENSITIVE STATE, THEY ARE USUALLY QUITE UNABLE TO BEAR WITH OTHERS. A person's temper often depends a great deal upon the state of his health. If a man is perfectly well, sound in mind and body, he can put up with a good deal. But there are times when the head aches, or when the tooth aches, or when the heart aches, or when there is an overpowering sense of nervousness upon you—and then you know what a very little thing will put you out. "Oh, take that child away!" you cry, petulantly, "I cannot bear its noise." That ringing bell has startled you. That cry of the vegetable seller in the street has quite irritated you and now you are in a state of mind to act the part of a tyrant!

One who was discussing a certain trial said, "I wonder what the jurymen are having for breakfast this morning, for their food will have a good deal to do with the verdict they will give." And, no doubt, unless a person is pretty well and in a good mental and spiritual condition, his weakness or his sensitiveness will make him deal severely with others even for a very small offense. What a mercy it is that the One with whom we have to deal is, "God and not man"! Our glorious Jehovah is never weak, impetu-

ous, unjust, ungenerous! He is always magnanimous, kind, gracious, forbearing! He is never in such a condition that He feels ready to be irritated with His creatures, but, self-contained and self-possessed, dwelling in the eternal sublimities of His own unsullied happiness, the God over all, blessed forever, He is in that state of mind—if I may so speak of Him after the manner of men—that He is willing to pass by iniquity, transgression and sin. He is a God ready to pardon, waiting to forgive the guilty. Could you truly know Him and see how free He is from those human frailties which lie at the roots of all irritability and unwillingness to forgive offenders, you would understand what a mercy it is that He is, "God, and not man."

Come, poor Soul, approach your God! You have not to come before an angry judge! You have not to approach an austere person who is ready to take offense even at little things, but you are coming to the infinitely-blessed God who delights not in the death of any, but would rather that they should turn to Him and live!

III. There is a third reason why we should rejoice that the Lord is "God, and not man. It is this—MEN ARE NOT ANXIOUS TO RECONCILE TO THEMSELVES THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED THEM IF THEY ARE PERSONS OF BAD CHARACTER.

A man who has been injured may, in the greatness of his mind, say, "I hope that person did not realize the wrong that he was doing. I hope that he is a good man—he must surely have misunderstood the consequences of his action. He probably only made a mistake, so I am willing to see him and, frankly, to forgive him and to put the matter right as soon as possible." But suppose that you have been grievously wronged by some mean, base individual, whose character you know to be altogether beneath contempt? I know what you say to yourself, "Well, I shall not put myself out of the way to seek *him*. I do not particularly care what he thinks or says about me. Perhaps it is just as well that such a person as he is should remain at a distance. I do not need his company. Let him go, he really is not worth my seeking to be reconciled to him."

Ah, Sirs, if God had said that concerning us, He would have spoken justly, indeed! For us, creatures of the dust, to have offended our great and glorious Creator. For us, worms of the earth, to have offended the Infinite Jehovah and to have done it willfully and continually as we have done, might well have made the Lord say, "There, let them go. If they will be My enemies, let them be My enemies. They cannot harm Me and their curses will fall on their own heads. If they speak evil of Me, what does it matter to Me while I have the songs of angels and of cherubim and seraphim? If they despise Me, what is their opinion worth, one way or the other? Let them go."

But, dear Friends, the Lord does not deal thus with us, for He is, "God, and not man." What a wonder of Grace and mercy it is that He should actually desire that we should be reconciled to Him! That He should desire it with anxiety, should long for it, and that His whole heart should go forth with the desire! The Lord is not willing that we should be His enemies. He is not willing to treat us as His enemies, but, to speak after the manner of men, He is anxious to reconcile us to Himself and,

therefore, He sends to us His ambassadors with tears beseeching us to be reconciled to Him! Oh, this is Godlike! This is Divine!

IV. In addition to the points I have mentioned, I must remind you that THERE ARE SOME MEN WHO ARE WILLING TO BE RECONCILED TO THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED THEM IF THE OFFENDERS WILL BEG FORGIVENESS. Notice what they say—"That person has done me grievous wrong. I am quite willing to pardon him, but let him *ask* to be pardoned. I do not think it is my place to go after him. I am the offended person and it cannot be expected that I should humble myself before him. If he comes to me and asks forgiveness, I shall be going a great way if I do heartily forgive him. But as to being the first to move in this matter—well, it is not to be expected of me." No, Friend, it is not to be expected that *you* should do so, for you are only a man. But the Lord is, "God, and not man" and, therefore, He is the first to move in the direction of the reconciliation that is to end the quarrel.

It is the offended One, the grievously offended One, who comes to the offender and says, "Let us be friends. I will blot out this offense, I will remove this sin. Come to Me. Accept the reconciliation I am prepared to give." I feel half inclined to stop here and to say, "Let us sing, again, the last verse of that grand hymn that we sang before prayer, and roll out the refrain in full thunder of grateful thanksgiving—

"'Oh may this strange, this matchless Grace,
This God-like miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise,
And all the angelic choirs above!
Who is pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?'"

It is never the sinner who wants to be reconciled first. It is always God, in the freeness of His Grace, who comes to the sinner—no sinner can ever be premature with God! If you are anxious to be reconciled to God, it is He who has *given you that anxiety*. It is His own infinite Grace that has begun to work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, for here is seen the superiority of the Godhead to the highest and the kindest manhood—that the Lord begins the work of reconciliation by Himself—seeking out those who have offended against Him!

V. Next, A MAN MAY BE WILLING TO BE RECONCILED IF THE OFFENDER DOES NOT REPEAT THE OFFENSE. Suppose that the offending person breaks out again with a new offense just as the reconciliation is about to be given. "There," says the man he has offended, "I was quite willing to have overlooked the past, but look, he is up to his evil ways again! I stood prepared to give him my right hand, but he has added insult to injury! Even while we were talking about reconciliation, look what he has done—he has made a new breach! If there had been nothing between us before, he has now acted in a way that would have commenced a terrible battle between us. I cannot put up with this. You cannot reasonably expect that I should be on terms of amity with one who, again and again and again repeats the grievance—and who, having done me wrong, at the very time that I am inviting him to be reconciled, commits that wrong again! There is a limit to all things and certainly there must be a limit to the pardon that a man will give to an offender."

Just so, just so. I knew there was such a limit. I do not altogether blame you, I do not say much against you, but I do say much in commendation of the forgiving Grace of God! Though we sin. Though even while the sinner is repenting, there is still a measure of sin about him—and while God is forgiving and while we are receiving the forgiveness—there is still evil about us, yet He forgives! Is He not, as one said, a great Forgiver? There is not any offense so aggravated but that God is willing to forgive you if you come to Jesus Christ by faith! If you have heaped up your sins, mountain upon mountain, as the giants in the old fable were said to have piled Pelion upon Ossa, hill upon hill—if you have done even this, yet is God willing to sweep them all away and still be your Friend!

You remember that blessed expression in the 55th of Isaiah, "He will abundantly pardon"? I cannot help ringing out those words again and again, "He will abundantly pardon! He will abundantly pardon." I hope that the music of them may strike the ear of some poor desponding soul who will say, "That is the word for me! It must be either great mercy or no mercy at all for me, for little mercy is of no use for such a sinner as I am! I must have great mercy to pardon my great sin." Oh, then, thank God that you have to deal with Him and not with man!

VI. Now let me go a step further. I feel morally certain that men who are offended with their fellows—MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VERY GREATLY WRONGED, WOULD NOT PROPOSE TO GO AND LIVE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE WRONGED THEM, AND TAKE UP A POSITION OF EQUALITY WITH THEM.

I could not expect a *king*, whose subjects had revolted against him, who had refused to render to him due honor and submission, who had even insulted his crown and done despite to his character, to say, "I will leave my palace and my crown, and my splendor and all that I have, and I will go and live among these rebels. I will wear their rags. I will fare as they fare and dwell in their hovels. I know that they will kill me—they will spurn me, and spit upon me and, at last they will fasten me to a cross and hang me up to die. But with the strong desire that they should be reconciled to me, I am willing to go and to be one with them."

Such a thing was never heard of among men! But listen. There is One who is God as well as Man, even that blessed Savior who descended from Heaven to earth, became a Man, shared our poverty, lived in the midst of our sin and, knowing that He would be despitefully treated, scorned, scourged and nailed to a Cross, yet endured all out of an excess of love which overflows to the guiltiest of the guilty even now! This was compassion worthy of a God, that the Son of the Highest should leave the perfections of Heaven to dwell here amid the infirmities and the sins of earth, as you know He did!

VII. If such wondrous love were possible to any man, here is another thing that I cannot conceive of, that any man would say, "I have been grievously wronged by that person. The injury is a very cruel one and there is no remedy for it, but I WILL, MYSELF, BEAR THE PENALTY FOR ALL THE WRONG WHICH HAS BEEN DONE. The offender has broken the law. There is a penalty laid upon him for what he has done and which he righteously deserves to bear. It was an offense against me and

he deserves to be punished for it—but I will bear the whole penalty myself."

We never heard any mere man say, "Here is a burglar who has broken into my house. He is to serve five years in prison for his crime, but I will offer to go to prison in order that he may be set free." Or, "Here is a murderer doomed to die, but I will offer to suffer in his place, that he may be accounted innocent." Such a thing was never heard of among men! But this is *exactly* what God has done!

As Judge, the righteous God must punish sin. Say what you will, there is a necessity that the Judge of all the earth should do right. If you could take away the justice of God and the fact of the judgment to come, you would have stolen the linchpin from the wheels of God's chariot! You would have marred the moral government of the universe! Sin must be punished, but the Judge, Himself, condescends to bear the penalty for the offenses committed against Himself! Mark—to bear the consequences of sin committed against His own authority and His own Person—and to bear those consequences in His own Person so that the offending one may be reconciled to Him! There never was such another tale as I am now telling you! It could not have been invented by men—it must be Divine! It has such a stamp of originality about it, that it must have come from God! It is so Divine on the very surface of it that it must be a blessed fact!

God Himself becomes the Substitute for those who have broken His own Law and done despite to His own name and, in union with human nature, in His own body on the Cross, He bears the consequences of the sin which otherwise must have fallen upon His enemies—the guilty sons of men! It is a very amazing story, this, "old, old story of Jesus and His love." I cannot tell it to you as I should like to tell it, but it does not so much matter how it is told. The power of it lies not in the telling of it, but in the doctrine and Truth, itself, when blessed by the Spirit of God!

VIII. MEN WOULD NOT ENTREAT, AGAIN AND AGAIN, AN OFFENDER IF HE REFUSED THE PARDON. When a man has done all that lies in his power to make peace. When he has even suffered what he ought not to have suffered in order to produce peace with one who has offended him—suppose that after all that he comes to the offender and he says, "Let us be friends," and the person turns on his heels and says, "I have too much to do to attend to you"? Or, suppose that he says, "I do not need any of your peace! It is nothing to me, I have other things to think of"? And suppose that this generous-hearted one should say, "But incline your ear and come to me. Hear what I have to say! Come, now, and let us reason together"? And suppose that the man says, "I need none of your reasoning! I care nothing about all this talk! I do not believe it—it is all an idle tale and I want to hear nothing of it"? And suppose that this generous person should follow him and entreat him, persuade him, implore him, plead with him—and still use a thousand arguments of loving kindness with him?

"Ah," you say, "that is not like man!" No, it is not. But He who deals in mercy with you is "God, and not man," and therefore He pleads with you who have long resisted Him and begs you, even now, to listen to Him—

and even now to turn to Him! Listen to His own words, "Turn you, turn you, from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" These are the pleadings of God, Himself, with men who have sinned against Him. If you pleaded for mercy at God's feet and were importunate with Him, that would seem natural enough. But for *God to plead with you* and to beseech you to accept His mercy is supernatural and Divine!

IX. Yet again, remember that MEN WOULD NOT RESTORE AN OFFENDER WITHOUT A SEASON OF PROBATION. Suppose that someone had grievously offended any one of you and that he asked your forgiveness? Do you not think that you would probably say to him, "Well, yes, I forgive you, but I—I—I—cannot *forget* it"? Ah, dear Friends, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off! It is a lame forgiveness and is not worth much. "But," one says, "I need to see how this man goes on. If he is really sincerely penitent for what he has done and he acts kindly to me in the future, then I think I could believe him to be sincere and I think—I hope—I could restore him to my favor." Ah, yes, that is because you are a man that you talk like that! But He of whom I am speaking is "God, and not man," and His invitation to you is, "Come to Me just as you are." The Lord will receive you and forgive you without any probation!

There was a good old minister who said, "The Lord Jesus took me into His service without a character. He gave me a good character and He has helped me to keep it even to my old age." Yes, He does take us without a character, so come to Him just as you are! He freely forgives and He perfectly forgets, for He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"—a feat in which Omnipotence outdoes itself! For God to forget is impossible! Yet He does forget the sins of His people. This is one of the impossibilities that are only possible to Omnipotent Grace—it would be impossible with men, but it is possible with the Lord, for He is "God, and not man."

X. Yet further, MEN CANNOT FORESEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING LENIENT. One says, "I do not see what the consequences would be if a man is to behave so badly toward me as this one has done, and I am to overlook it and say nothing about it. After that, I shall have every dog barking at my heels. I really think, Sir, that you must not preach up there and tell us to forgive *absolutely* because you know that if you tread on a worm, it will turn. And really, there is something due to society. I cannot suffer such wrong as this and pass it by, for everybody will be doing me a similar injury and saying, 'He is such a flat, and so soft, that he will never resent it.'"

My good Sir, I am not going to argue with you! You are a man, so go your way among other men. But He of whom I speak is "God, and not man." He knows precisely what the consequences of forgiving sinners will be and yet He does it! When we preach free pardon to the chief of sinners, what do you think they say in certain newspapers? Why, that we are encouraging immorality! The wise men who write for them say that our doctrine does not tend to public morality. Ah, poor dears, what do they know about *morality*? We do not care much about their opinion on *that* point, for we see well enough where true morals are. They run side by side with "Free Grace and dying love" and we intend to still preach

those Truths of God albeit that there are some, and we must admit it, who will turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness! If a man means to hang himself, he is sure to find a piece of rope somewhere. And when a man means to live in sin, he can find an argument for it even in the infinite mercy of God! But we must not stop our preaching because of that. God is willing to forgive crimes of the greatest horror, sins of an intense blackness, known in their full blackness only to Him—and as for the consequences, He is well aware of what they will be.

XI. I am going another step further. MEN WOULD NOT LOVE, ADOPT, HONOR AND ASSOCIATE WITH THE OFFENDING. "Well," says one, "suppose I could entirely forgive everything that has been done against me? Is anything more required of me?" Could you do something else? Could you love the one who slandered you, who tried to take away your good name, who sought to injure your business and offended you in every way that he could? Could you take him into your family and make him your son, or make him heir of all that you have? Could you provide for him for life? Could you be content to make him your friend and companion? Could you trust him, do you think—actually *trust* him with the most precious things that you have? Could you do all that?

"Well, Mr. Spurgeon," says one, "it is an unreasonable thing that you are asking. You are talking quite unreasonably." I know that I am, but that is because you are a man that it seems unreasonable to you. Yet our God goes beyond all reason, for this is *exactly* what He does. He takes the wretched sinner just as he is, blots out his sin and gives him to believe in Christ—and to as many as believe in Him, to them He gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name! More than that, He says, through His Apostle, that if children, then they are heirs—"heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." These poor miserable sinners become the objects of His daily care as they are the objects of His eternal choice! He engraves their names upon the palms of His hands. They lie on His heart and *in* His heart!

"They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." Yes, more—Christ is married to them! Oh, what condescension it is for Him to be married to those who were black as Ethiopians! There is nothing that He will not do for a pardoned sinner! There is nothing that He will withhold from a soul that, believing in Christ, has sin forgiven! You shall be with Him where He is. You shall sit on His Throne with Him. You shall reign with Him forever and ever, as surely as you come and accept His infinite Grace!

XII. The last point is that MEN WOULD NOT TRUST ONE WHO HAD FORMERLY WRONGED THEM. I have always felt, in my own mind, that it was one of the clearest proofs that I had God's forgiveness of my many sins when I was trusted to preach the Gospel. I should think that if a prodigal came back to his father, the old gentleman would kiss him and receive him, and rejoice greatly over him—but the next Saturday, market day, the old gentleman would say—"I cannot send young William to market—that would be putting temptation in his way. Here, John, you have always been with me—go to market and buy and sell for me, for all that I have is yours. William, you stay at home with me." He might not let him

see all that he meant, but he would say to himself, "Dear boy, he is hardly fit for that great trust. I love him, but still, I hardly dare trust him as much as that."

But see what my Lord did with me—when I came home to Him as a poor prodigal, He said, "Here is My Gospel, I will entrust you with it—go and preach it." I bless His name that I have not preached anything else and I do not mean to begin to do so—

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

Then the Lord said to me, "I will trust you with those people at Waterbeach, at New Park Street, at the Surrey Gardens, and at the Tabernacle. Go and see what you can do to bring them to Heaven." I do long to see souls saved as one great result of my ministry! But what an instance of my Lord's love it is that He thus trusts me! That was one of the things that made Paul hold up his hands in astonishment—he said that he had been put in trust with the Gospel and he could not make it out. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, yet he was put in trust with the Gospel!

O dear Heart, you who have been a drunk, or a swearer, or whatever else you have been, come and trust in Jesus! If you do, I should not wonder but that one of these days you, also, will be put in trust to preach the Gospel of Christ. "Oh," you say, "I could never preach." You do not know what the Grace of God can do for you and through you—and you would, anyhow, be able to tell what a wonderful Savior He was who saved you, would you not? That is the best preaching in the world—telling others what God has done for you! And I know that the burden of your testimony would be, "He is God, and not man," and you would ask them to sing over and over again—

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"

Now trust the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the way of salvation! "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Or, if you want the plan of salvation stated in full, here it is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." God grant to all of us Grace to believe in Christ and to confess our faith in Him for his dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 202, 568.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 11.

Verse 1. *When Israel was a child.* When the nation was yet young and had scarcely started on its march among the peoples of the earth—"When Israel was a child"—

1. *Then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt.* God's love does not depend upon the standard of our spiritual attainments. While we are yet children in Grace, the Father's love is set upon us, as it was upon Israel in its beginnings as a nation.

2. *As they called them, so they went from them.* Such was the perversity of this child-nation which, nevertheless, God loved, that though called by Jehovah, they went away and refused to obey the Divine call. The Israelites in Egypt "hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage" and, even after their great deliverance, they were constantly turning aside from the path pointed out by Moses, who bade them be faithful to their God.

2. *They sacrificed unto Baalim.* They offered sacrifice to many Baals, first to one and then to another, for men will readily change their idols when they know not the true God.

2, 3. *And burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go.* This child-nation was taught by God how to walk—

3. *Taking them by their arms.* As nurses hold up their little children when, for the first time they try to stand or toddle along.

3. *But they knew not that I healed them.* This was an amazing thing and it shows the great blindness of man, that he does not know his own Physician. It was so with Israel—"They knew not that I healed them." Surely, Brothers and Sisters, it seems impossible that we should not know our Divine Healer, yet our blindness is extreme by nature and leads to many a folly.

4. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.* As men do to their cattle when they have been plowing and they come to the end of the day's work, then the bit is removed, or the yoke is lifted off the shoulder and fit fodder is provided for the cattle that they may be refreshed. This is what God did to His people Israel. He brought them out of Egypt where they had to perform hard tasks, caused them to rest from their labors and gave them both material and spiritual meat to eat. Nevertheless they were ungrateful to Him. We say that ingratitude is the worst of sins, but, alas, it is one of the most common evils and we, ourselves, are ingrates to our God!

6. *He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king because they refused to return.* If we try to escape from our trouble without hearing the voice of God in it, we shall run into another. If, by our own plotting and scheming, we escape from Egypt, then the Assyrian shall be our king and there is small difference between Assyria and Egypt. It is always best to take with submission the sorrow that God appoints, lest, by fleeing from the bear, the serpent bite us and so we go from bad to worse.

6. *And the sword shall abide on his cities and shall consume his branches, and devour them because of their own counsels.* That is a very striking expression, "Because of their own counsels." It should be a solemn warning to us not to follow the devices of our own heart when we see the consequences of Israel's walking after his own way.

7. *And My people are bent to backsliding from Me.* They seemed as if they *must* do it—as if their hearts were set upon it. They were "bent" upon it. Oh, that our bent and bias were towards holiness and not towards backsliding!

7. *Though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him.* See how Israel puts God away and will not hear Jehovah's voice? Now observe the change in the chapter, for God speaks of *His* faithfulness even to backsliding Israel. He does not give His people up. He still yearns over them in the most tender pity and forbearance.

8. *How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.* And this Divine turning and repenting, remember, were toward a people who did not turn to the Lord! God turned towards a people that would not turn towards Him and His repentings were "kindled together" towards the nation that would not repent! Oh, the unspeakable, the unthinkable Grace of God! He does for us "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."

9. *I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.* Our hope lies in the fact that God is God! Sometimes that Truth of God is a terror to men—they are distressed at the thought of the great and holy God, yet in this Truth is their only hope of salvation! The Lord says, "I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man."

9. *The Holy One in the midst of you: and I will not enter into the city.* That is, the Lord says, "I will not come into it to see all its iniquities, lest in My wrath I smite and destroy it." How tenderly does God bear with wicked men! How great is His long-suffering! How graciously He seems to close His eyes, as if He would not see that which must bring upon us swift destruction if He looked upon it in His righteous anger!

10. *They shall walk after the LORD.* It is a great blessing when men begin to seek the Lord whom they formerly shunned. This proves that there has been worked in them a complete change of heart.

10. *He shall roar like a lion: when He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.* God's terrible voice often makes men tremble and that is one proof of the working of His Grace in their hearts, for they tremble before Him and flee unto Him.

11, 12. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, says the LORD. Ephraim compasses me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints.* There are still some left to serve Jehovah! There is a remnant according to the Election of Grace even in the very worst of times. "Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints." May we be found among the faithful few! Amen.

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"HEREIN IS LOVE"
NO. 2448

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 19, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"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.

As there not scenes and circumstances which, now and then, transpire before us that prompt an exclamation like that of the Apostle, "Herein is love"? When we have seen the devotedness of a mother to her children. When we have marked the affection of friend for friend and caught a glimpse in different human relationships of the kindness that exists in human hearts, we have said, "Herein is love!" Yesterday these words seemed to rise up and float upon my tongue, although I did not use them, for they seemed to be consecrated to something higher than creature affection. I had the painful duty of attending the Abney Park Cemetery, to bury a beloved Sister in Christ, one of the most useful women we had among us—and as I stood there to commit her body to the grave, I was pleased—I cannot tell you how I was beyond measure pleased, on that dark foggy day, at that distance from town, to find nearly a hundred, mostly poor people, gathered there to show their respect to their friend who had helped, in many cases, to feed them and clothe them and, in every instance, had tried to point them to Christ.

There were thousands of tears shed of the sincerest and most heavenly kind. While conducting the service, I could not help feeling not only a sympathy with her bereaved husband, but with those who had been the objects of our Sister's care—men and women who, perhaps, had given up a day's work and walked long dreary miles in the unpropitious weather of yesterday, that they might come and mingle their tears over the dust of one who, as a Christian woman, had served them well. I could not help thinking, and it suggested the text to me, "Herein is love!" Seeing what love had done and seeing how love comes back in return, I said within myself, when love has learned its way into one bosom, it scatters its seed and fructifies in the hearts of hundreds more! Love begets love—let it once begin and none can tell its end!

But the words were too sacred for me to use, even at that solemn service, though they came up so suddenly to the surface of my mind. The Apostle had consecrated them to another love, still higher, more profound, more perfect and more celestial. I shall ask you, tonight, to look at

and consider the wonder which the Apostle discovered and made him, with uplifted hands, exclaim, "Herein is love!"

The wonder, he tells us, which astonished him was not that we loved God, for suppose that all men had loved God—what wonder would there have been in it? God created us. We are wonderful specimens of His power and wisdom. The various devices for securing our comfort and maintaining us in life—the devices within the body and outside the body, the way in which the whole world is made to be the servant of man, so that, as George Herbert says—

"Man is one world, and has another to attend him,"

these tokens of benevolence ought to have made all men love God! If every creature who sprang from the loins of Adam had lived a perfect life of obedience and had continually reverenced the God who made him and supplied his needs, there would not have been anything so very remarkable in the fact, for God deserves the love of all His creatures. Making His sun to shine upon us and giving us fruitful seasons—keeping us in life and preserving us from going down into the Pit— we *ought* to love Him. And if we did, it would not be anything to excite astonishment.

And, beloved Brothers and Sisters, when the Grace of God comes into the human heart, casts Satan out of it and renders us capable of loving God, there is nothing very surprising in our loving Him. I shall not ask you to think of the ordinary love which there is in common Christians. Indeed, the wonder about it is that it should be so ordinary, so little, so faint! It is a great wonder—to be spoken of with tears—that God should do so much for us and that we should love Him so little in return. Watts did well to pen those lines—

"Dear Lord! And shall we ever lie
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to You,
And Yours to us so great?
Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove
With all Your quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,
And that shall kindle ours."

But now, think of the truly earnest missionary. Think of such men as Carey, or Moffat, or John Williams—men who give up all the comforts of life, all the hopes of wealth—and go forth among a barbarous people to suffer insult, perhaps to meet with death for Christ's sake! They brave the terrors of fever and pestilence! They pass through jungles! They dare tempestuous seas—no mountains are too high, no weathers are too stern to deter them! They force their way into the center of Africa, or high up among the Esquimau if they may but tell of the love of Jesus to dying men! It may seem very amazing to us, but if you come to think of it, compared with what *Christ has done for them*, they may, and they usually do, sit down and confess that they have done nothing whereof to glory! They have done only what it was their duty to have done and they all confess that they fall short of the service which Christ deserves.

Though we might say, in a modified sense, "Herein is love," yet, after all, it is but faintly spoken, for it is but comparatively true.

As we have read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, or some other history of the saints, and marveled at the stories of their confessing Christ before the Inquisitors, singing joyful hymns when their bones were put out of joint upon the rack, or standing boldly up upon the blazing fire while their flesh was being consumed, still testifying to the preciousness of Christ, have we not said, "Herein is love"? Well might we say so as we contrasted our love with theirs, but, after all, if you will but think a minute, it is a little thing for a man to be willing to burn to death for One who saved him from everlasting burning! 'Tis sharp work, but it is soon over, and the reward makes up for it all while Divine Grace sustains the sufferer under the fiery trial! There is nothing, even in the love of martyrs, worthy of praise when compared with the exceeding love of Christ! These are stars—let them hide their heads in the Presence of the Sun! These are all sweet flowers, yet compare them not with the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, whose fragrance fills both earth and Heaven! Those whose spiritual senses are qualified to judge, forget all else while they stand entranced before this one gathering up of everything that is lovely and cry, "Herein is love!"

Oh, this love of Christ—it is beyond all degree, standard, or compass! In comparison with it, other love, high and noble as that other love may be, dwindles into insignificance! Then let me ask you now, somewhat more in detail, to think of the love of God in Christ Jesus towards us as the text sets it forth.

I. The love of God is LOVE TO THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE HIM. "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us." When God loves those who love Him, it seems to be according to the law of nature, but when He loves those who do *not* love Him, this must be above all laws—it is according, certainly, to the extraordinary rule of Divine Grace, and Grace alone! There was not a man on earth who loved God. There was none that did good—no, not one. And yet, the Lord fixed the eye of His electing love upon sinners in whom there was no thought of loving Him! There is no more love to God in an unrenewed heart than there is of life within a piece of granite. No more of love to God is there within the soul that is unsaved than there is of fire within the depths of the ocean's waves! And here, indeed, is the wonder, that when we had no love to God, He should have loved us!

This is a mild way of expressing it, for instead of loving God, my Brothers and Sisters, you and I withheld from Him the poorest tribute of homage. We were careless and indifferent. Days and weeks passed over our heads in which we hardly *thought* of God. If there had not been any God, it would not have made much difference to us as to our thoughts, habits and conversation. God was not in all our thoughts and, perhaps, if somebody could have informed us that God was dead, we would have thought it a fine piece of news, for then we could live as we liked and need not be under any fear of being judged by Him! Instead of loving

God—though now we rejoice that He loves us—we rebelled against Him. Which of His Laws have we not broken? We cannot put our finger upon one command without being compelled to acknowledge that we have violated its claims, or come short of its demands.

I do not want to dilate upon a general doctrine, tonight. I rather want to press home to the conscience of every child of God here that God loves him. You know very well that God did not love you because you loved Him, for there was not—you will confess it painfully—anything like love to God in you, but much, very much, that sprang from natural enmity and aversion to Him. Why, then, did He love you? Men do not generally love those who hate them, those who spite them, those who give them ill names—and yet God loved us! Why, there are some of the Lord's people that God loved who, before conversion, used to curse Him to His face! The Sabbath was the day they took for sensual pleasure. They were drunks; they were unclean; they were everything that is vile—and yet He loved them! Oh, the wonder of this! When they were reeking in the kennels of sin—when there was no sin too black and too vile for them to commit—God loved them! Oh, never dream that He began to love you when you began to love Him! Oh, no! But it was because He loved you hard and fast, when you were reveling in your sin, that His love put its arms around you, lifted you out of your sin and made you what you are!

Oh, but this is good tidings to some of you! Perhaps you are still, as all God's people once were, living in sin. You hardly know why you have strayed in here, but perhaps, while you sit and listen, you may hear that God has loved you. Oh, that it may come to be true, that you may prove to be one of His chosen people whom He loves even though in sin and whom He will love till you come out of sin and turn to Christ and get pardon for it! Pray, dear Christian people, pray that it may be so! God hears prayer. Put up the prayer silently now—"Lord, attract some of Your chosen people to Christ tonight! Let some who never thought of Him, but were bent on sinning rather than of being brought to God, see Jesus and find salvation though Him." "Herein is love!" God loved the unlovely, the hateful, the vile, the depraved—and loved them though they did not love Him!

II. Another part of the wonder lies in this, THAT THIS LOVE SHOULD COME FROM SUCH AN ONE AS GOD IS. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that *He* loved us." What does God want in loving us? You never saw a fly on the dome of St. Paul's—it would have been too small an object for you to see when walking round the Cathedral! Now, a fly on the dome of St. Paul's is a monstrous being, a marvelous individual compared with *you* crawling about this world. Why, it bears a much larger proportion to St. Paul's than you do to this globe! What an insignificant little creature you are! Supposing you could love that fly—it would seem a strange thing. Or that an angel could love that fly—it were stranger still! But that *God* should love *us* is much more a wonder! Lift up your eyes to the heavens and count the stars. Listen to the astronomer, as he tells you that those little specks of light are mighty worlds, some of them

infinitely superior to this world of ours. And that there are millions upon millions of such worlds glittering in the sky and that perhaps all these millions that we can see are only like one little corner, one little sand hill of the worlds that God has made—while throughout boundless space there may be long leagues of worlds—if I may use the expression, innumerable as the sands that belt the shore around the great and mighty deep!

Now, one man in a world—how little! But one man in *myriads* of worlds, one man in the *universe*—how insignificant! And herein is love, that God should love so insignificant a creature! For what is God compared with the worlds, their number and their probable extent of space? God is infinitely greater than all the ideas we suggest by such comparisons! God Himself is greater than all space! No conception of greatness that ever crossed a mind of the most enlarged faculties can enable us to apprehend the grandeur of God as He really is! Yet this great and glorious Being who fills all things and sustains all things by the word of His power, condescends to rivet upon us—not His pity, mark you, not His thoughts, but the very love of His soul which is the essence of Himself, for He is love. "Herein is love!" An insignificant creature—vile, filthy and polluted—loved by the august Creator and loved with all the infinite affection of Jehovah's heart! Stand still and wonder! You cannot fathom this depth! You cannot scale this height, for imagination's utmost stretch dies away at the effort!

III. And is it not a point of wonder THAT THIS LOVE SHOULD BE UNSOUGHT? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, *and sent His Son.*" We never went to Him—He came to us. Suppose that, after we had all sinned, we had fallen on our knees and cried importunately, "Oh, Father, forgive us!"? Suppose that day after day we had been, with many piteous tears and cries, supplicating and entreating forgiveness of God? It would be great love, then, that He should devise a way of pardoning us. But no—it was the very reverse! God sent an ambassador of peace to us—we sent no embassage to Him. Man turned his back on God and went farther and farther from Him and never thought of turning his face toward his best Friend! It is not *man* that turns beggar to God for salvation! It is, if I may dare to say it, as though the Eternal God, Himself, did beg of His creatures to be saved! Jesus Christ has not come into the world to be *sought* for, but to *seek* that which is lost. It all begins with Him! Unsought, unbidden by the object of His compassion, Jesus came into the world.

Now, I wonder if it may come true, tonight, that some here shall be found of God, after whom they have never sought? Such things have happened. When John Williams was converted—I think you know the story—there had been an agreement made to go out with a little party of youths to commit sin. It was very foul sin, too—and they sent John Williams into Whitefield's Tabernacle to look at the clock. The clock happened to be over the door, so that young Williams was obliged to go a little way up the aisle to see it. There was a crowd and something that was

being said by the preacher caught his ear and he stood and listened. His companions outside began to be vexed with him for keeping them so long, but he kept them still longer—and the deed of darkness that was to have been done that night was never done—for God had found John Williams who had never sought after Him!

I do not say this to encourage any of you to put off seeking the Lord, for the command is, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." But still, here is the mercy! It is written, "I am found of them that sought Me not; I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name." The Grace of God sometimes comes in like a sheriff's officer, takes a man by the collar and says to him, "You must turn tonight." Jesus Christ sometimes comes to men as He did to Zacchaeus, who was up in the sycamore tree. He says, "Come down, for today I must abide at your house." It is not, "If you will," but, "I must! I must! It must be so!" So, O Lord, make a "must" of it tonight! Oh, make a "must" of it to many here, that You must abide in their house! Then they must give up their sins and they must turn to You!

But herein is love, the wonderful love of God in condescending thus, not only to wait for us, but to wait upon us and come to us with His effectual Grace and save us. Though I speak but feebly on these points, I hope that your hearts will not beat feebly. I trust the children of God will be praising and magnifying the Lord as they say to themselves, "That is just how He dealt with me! That is precisely how He showed His favor to me! 'Herein is love.'"

IV. How, too, may THE THOUGHTFULNESS OF DIVINE LOVE raise our admiration. "Not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now observe the consideration and counsel this implies. We had sinned against God's Law, but His Law was not an arbitrary despotism—it was the embodiment of a constitution equitably and benevolently adapted for the government of the universe. It was framed in such wisdom that obedience involved *happiness* and violation entailed misery! And punishment for breaking God's Laws was not in any respect irrelative or unconnected with the harmony of reciprocal interests. Not to punish the guilty was to exact the penalty of suffering from the innocent! Think what an injury and injustice would be inflicted upon all the honest men in London if the thieves were never punished for their roguery. It would be making the innocent suffer if you allowed the guilty to escape. God, therefore, not out of arbitrary choice, but from very necessity of rightness, must punish us for having done wrong. How was this to be avoided? His mighty love suggested the plan! Had it not done so, a parliament of angels could not have devised a scheme! The assembled senate of all the intellects that God had ever made could not have sketched a plan by which the eternal Laws of right and wrong should stand unshaken, God's honor should be untarnished and yet He should be able to forgive us. But God's love thought out a plan, a wondrous plan, by which Jesus came to be a Substitute to stand in our place, that we might go free! But I will not pause over the design,

because there is the open manifestation of that kindness and love for us now to look at.

V. "Herein is love"—SELF-DENYING LOVE, AMAZING LOVE, UNEXAMPLED LOVE—language fails me. I know no words by which to set forth the excellence of this love. 'Tis Divine love, love beyond degree—God "sent His Son to be propitiation for our sins." It was necessary that this only-begotten Son of the Father should suffer in the flesh, that He should be delivered up into the hands of sinners, cruelly treated, spit upon, nailed to a tree and put to death! Who among us would give up his son? Dear, unspeakably dear to us are the children of our loins. Well, we might give them up for our country in the day of battle. We might say, "For our hearths and for our homes let the young men go," but it would be difficult—as many a widowed mother has known when she has read the list of the killed in battle and seen that her brave boy has fallen. The blood-stained drapery of war has had but little glory in her eyes.

But who among us would think of giving up his son to die for his *enemy*, for one who never did him a service, but treated him ungratefully, repulsed a thousand overtures of tenderness and went on perversely hardening his neck? No man could do it! Ah, think, then, what manner of love it is that God's only-begotten Son should be willing to die, that the Holy One should be willing to become a man, willing to take our sins upon Him, willing to suffer for those sins, willing to endure the bloody sweat, willing to bare His shoulders to the lictor's scourge, willing to give up Himself, body and soul, to the pangs of such a death as was never known before or since! "Herein is love!" If ever I have coveted powers of speech such as God has committed to some men, powers of thrilling the soul and moving the heart, I covet them tonight, for how can I speak of the wondrous tragedy of the Cross? How can I set forth the death-throes of my blessed Lord and Master?

Instead of attempting what I must certainly fail to accomplish, I do but ask you to let your mental vision look for a minute at the spectacle, itself. He who is the Lord of Glory is mocked by rough soldiers. They spit in His face! They pluck His hair; they call Him king and they bow with mimic homage before Him. He is scourged and the scourging is no child's play. He is made to carry His Cross upon His shoulders through the streets of Jerusalem! He is brought to a rising knoll outside the city gates—the Old Bailey, the Tyburn of Jerusalem. He is thrown upon His back—the iron is driven through His hands and feet! He is lifted up—the Cross is fixed into its place with a jar that dislocate His bones! He cries, "I am poured out like water; all My bones are out of joint!" He suffers fever through the irritation of the nerves of the hands and feet till His mouth is dried up like an oven and His tongue cleaves to His jaws. He cries, "I thirst!" and they give Him vinegar mingled with gall.

Meanwhile, His soul is in tortures such as no man has ever felt! His spirit, lashed by a hurricane of Divine wrath, is like a sea when it boils as a pot, seething and tossing to and fro. Oh, the unknown depths of Jesus' griefs! And all this for His enemies—for us who loved Him not! For

us who never asked it at His hands. For us who refused to have it. For us who, when we are brought to accept the mercy, do not understand it. For us who, even when we somewhat understand it, do not feel anything like a corresponding gratitude. For us who, even if we feel the gratitude, do not show it, but go our way and forget it! For us who are utterly unworthy of anything like such affection! "Herein is love!" Oh, stand and wonder! I can do no more than ask you to wonder with me and God grant that our wondering may end in something reciprocal by way of love to Him and something practical by means of love put into action!

VI. With this question I shall conclude—WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE EFFECT OF LOOKING UPON THIS GREAT WONDER?

As the Apostle tells us in the next verse, "Beloved, if God so loved us, *we ought also to love one another.*" Christian, by the love which God has manifested to you, you are bound to love your fellow Christians! You are to love them though they have many infirmities. You have some, yourself, and if you cannot love one because he has a crusty temper, perhaps he may reply that he cannot love *you* because you have a lethargic spirit. Jesus loved you with all your infirmities—then love your infirm brethren! You tell me you cannot love because you have been offended by such a Brother, but you also offended Christ. What? Shall Christ forgive you all your myriad offenses and you not forgive your Brother? What was it, after all? "Well, he did not treat me respectfully." Ah, *that* is it—a poor worm needs to be treated respectfully! "But he spoke disparagingly of me and there is a Sister, here—she may be a Christian woman, but she said a very unkind thing of me."

Well, yes, but what does it matter? I have often thought when people have spoken ill of me and they have been very, very false in it, perhaps, if they had known me better, they might have found something true to say—and so I must be like we sometimes say of a boy when he is beaten and does not deserve it, "Well, he did deserve it, some time or other, for something else." Rather than get angry, smile over the offense. Who are we that we should expect everybody to honor us when nobody honored our Lord? Oh, let us be ready, at once, to forgive even to seventy times seven! A beautiful spirit worthy of a Christian was that of a man who found his horse in the pound one day and the farmer who put it in said, "I found your horse in my field and I put it in the pound. And if ever I catch it there again, I'll put it in again." "Well," replied the other, "I found six of your cows in my farmyard the other night eating my hay. I just drove them out and put them into your farmyard. I didn't pound them and if ever I catch them in my yard again, I'll do the same."

"Ah," the farmer said, "you are a better man than I am." And forthwith, he went and paid the fees and let his neighbor's horse out of the pound, ashamed of himself. Such a generosity of disposition becomes you, especially to your Christian Brothers and Sisters. If God has such wonderful love to us, let us love those who offend us and show hearts of compassion toward the Lord's poor people. It is easy to be courteous to those who are better off than ourselves and show deference to those who

wear respectable attire—but the thing is to love the Lord's people who are poor—yes, and to love them all the more tenderly for their poverty, for they have, in some respects, more of the image of Christ than we have. Christ was poor and so are they.

And let us cleave close to God's *persecuted* ones. Some people always run away from a man as soon as anybody flings a handful of dirt at him. But if God so loved us when we were sinners, we ought to love our fellow Christians when they are under a cloud. Are they persecuted for righteousness' sake? Then every brave spirit ought to say, "I am for that man—I am for that man!" I was pleased with the remark of a Brother I met, the other day. Alluding to the love he felt for his minister, he said, "The first reason why I came to hear him and love him was that I saw him abused in all the newspapers. And I said, 'There is something good in that man, I am sure of it, and as he is the weaker one, and all are against him, I am on his side till I find something against him.'" Oh, take care to rally round the persecuted Christian! Whenever the child of God is evilly spoken of, say, "My place shall be at his side! I will share in such an honor as that, that I may share in the honor which awaits the saints hereafter."

I have tried to speak to some here who are not converted and to put a few very comforting thoughts before them. If they go home and seek the Lord, He will be found of them. Yes, and if they trust Jesus Christ at once, they shall be saved! A young lady was reading a newspaper and her mother said, "Have you done with it?" She said, "Yes, I have done with it. I was only looking at it to see the death of Jane _____. Poor girl, she used to be a Sunday school teacher with me." Well, she said she had done with it, but you may depend upon it, she had not, for the fact that one was dead who had been her companion had not done with her—it would speak to her and impress her—and if she shook it off, the *responsibility* would not have done with her.

You have heard a sermon, tonight, and you may think, "Now I have done with it." Well, it may be so, but it has not done with you! You will be called to account for every Truth of God it contains, for every reminder to your conscience and every affectionate invitation that reaches your heart. Very few sermons, alas, are ever *done*! The most of them are listened to and forgotten, but if they were all done—that is, if their counsels and admonitions were carried into effect—what a blessing it would be! No, you have not done with it and this text has not done with you!

I think—no, I seem to know—that there are some who never will have done with this text, neither in this life nor in the life to come, for the text is saying to you, tonight, "Though you love not God, now, yet you shall love Him, for He has loved you, loved you with an everlasting love." And the thought of this text will entice you to go and seek Jesus to see if it is so. And when you find it so, you will say to your children, "There is no text in the Bible more beautiful to me than this one, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.'" And you may tell to your children's children that on such an evening that text seemed to get into your

soul, and to be set a ringing there like the old bell on the Inchcape Rock—the higher the storm, the louder it rang! And you shall hear it ring, ring, ring till it rings you to Christ and rings you into Heaven! And then in Heaven it will make sweet music in your ears and you will say, even there, "Herein is love, not that I loved God, but that He loved me, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for my sins."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 454, 23 (VERSION III), 782.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 23.

I hope we all know this Psalm by heart. May we also know it by heart experience! It is a sweet pastoral song just suited to our Sabbath evening worship. There is here no din of arms, no noise of war, but there is a delicious hush, only broken by the gentle tinkling of the sheep-bell. God give us that sweet rest tonight!

Verse 1. *The LORD is my shepherd.* All true rest begins with Jesus, as all the comfort of the sheep is provided for them by their shepherd. "The Lord is my shepherd." Is it so? Can you look up, poor defenseless sheep, and say, "The Lord is my shepherd"? Then comes the blessed inference—

1. *I shall not want.* I do not want, I cannot want. I shall never want with such a Shepherd as I have. He will provide for me. No, more, God Himself is my provision! All I need I have, for, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." I cannot provide for myself, but I shall not want. Famine may come and others who have no God to go to may pine and perish, but in the worst season I shall not want, for, "The Lord is my shepherd."

2. *He makes me to lie down in green pastures.* I am so weak that I even need God's help to enable me to lie down, but "He makes me to lie down." Yes, the rest of the soul is so hard to attain that nobody ever reaches it except by the power of God. He who made the heavens must *make* us to lie down if we are really to rest. What delightful rest it is when we lie down in His pastures which are always green! Did you ever find them dry? Our Shepherd makes us not only to feed, but so to feed that we lie down in the midst of the pastures. There is more than we can eat, so the Lord makes a couch of it for us—"He makes me to lie down in green pastures."

2. *He leads me beside the still waters.* There is, first, contemplation—"He makes me to lie down." Then there is activity. "He leads me." There is also progress and there is provision for our advance in the heavenly way—"He leads me." He leads me beside the waters of quietness, not by the rushing torrents of excitement, nor by the place of noisy strife. "He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." "He leads me beside the still waters." Not, "He drives, or drags," but He, Himself, leads, going first to show the way. It is for me to follow, happily to follow, where "He leads me beside the still waters."

3. *He restores my soul.* He can do it at once. He restores now. He is a restoring God. "He restores my soul." He brings my wandering spirit back when I forsake His ways and, having done that, He leads me, even more carefully than before. For a second time we have the Psalmist's declaration, "He leads me."

3, 4. *He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.* Though death's shadow hovers all around me and dampens my spirit. Though I feel as though I must die and cannot bear up under present trial any longer, "Yes, though I walk," for I do walk—I will not quicken my pace, I will not be in a flurry, I will not run for it. Though death, itself, shall overshadow me, I will keep up my walk with God. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." There is none, therefore I will not fear any. We often feel more afraid through our fear, itself, than through any real cause for fear. Some people seem to be always on the lookout for fear where there is none. Do not see any, nor let any enter your heart—say with the Psalmist, "I will fear no evil."

4. *For You are with me.* Should a sheep fear when the shepherd is with it? What cause has it to fear if that Shepherd is Omniscient, Omnipotent and full of tenderness?

4. *Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* Your rule and Your correction—Your rod, with which I sometimes am made to smart—Your staff, with which I am supported. These are my comforts, why should I fear? Are you drinking in all this precious Truth of God, dear Friends? Are you feeling it in your soul's deepest experience? This Psalm is very good to read, but it is far better to write out from your own experience! Make it a song of your own—not merely a song in the Book, but a song for yourselves!

5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* There is a fight going on and there are enemies all around. You do not generally have tables set in the hour of battle, but God keeps His people so calm amid the bewildering cry, so confident of victory, that even in the presence of their enemies, a table is spread with all the state of a royal banquet. "You prepare a table." There is a cloth on the table. There are the ornaments on it and there are all the accompaniments of a feast—"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." They may look on if they like. They may grin, they may wish they could devour, but they cannot sit down at the table and they cannot prevent me from sitting down at it! Let them blow their trumpets, let them fire their guns—"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." It is the very acme of security and repose that is here described. I know of no expression, not even that of lying down in green pastures, that is more full of restfulness than this—"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

5. *You anoint my head with oil.* At some feasts, they poured perfumed oil on the heads of the guests, so God will leave out nothing that is for

the joy and comfort of His people. "You anoint my head with oil." You shall have delicacies as well as necessities. You shall have joy as well as safety. You shall be prepared for service as well as preserved from destruction.

5. *My cup runs over.* I have not only what I wish, but I have more! Not only all I can hold, but something to spare—"My cup runs over." If this is the case with your cup, dear Friend, let it run over in thankful joy! And if you have more of this world's substance than you need, ask the poor and needy to come and catch that which flows over.

6. *Surely*—This is another of the Psalmist's inferences, and a very sure one. He does not say, "Perhaps," but, "Surely."

6. *Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* Here is a prince of the blood royal of Heaven attended by two body guards—goodness and mercy—which keep close behind him. These are the grooms that ride on the horses of salvation—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." "Goodness"—to provide for me. "Mercy"—to blot out my sin. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me"—not only now and then, but, "all the days of my life." When I get gray-headed and feeble and have to lean heavily upon my staff, these twin angels shall be close behind to bear me up and bear me through.

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* Even while I am here in this world, I will be—

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

dwelling with God! And, by-and-by, in the fullest sense, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." I always compare this Psalm to a lark. It begins on the ground among the sheep, but up it goes till you may hear its blessed notes echoing among the stars! "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." It has its nest in the grass of the green pastures, but it flies up like the strains of sweetest music rising even to the skies—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." God grant that this may be the portion of every one of us, for His great name's sake! Amen.

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

THE RULE AND REWARD OF SERVING CHRIST
NO. 2449

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 26, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 27, 1889.

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, and where I am there My servant will be also: if anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor." John 12:26.

THIS verse is all about serving and service. Three times over you get the word, "serve," or, "servant." Each clause of our text has in it a part of the verb, "to serve." You cannot have Christ if you will not serve Him! If you take Christ, you must take Him in all His Characters, not only as Friend, but also as Master. And if you are to become His disciple, you must also become His servant. I hope that no one here kicks against that Truth of God! Surely it is one of our highest delights on earth to serve our Lord and this is to be our blessed employment even in Heaven, itself—"His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face."

This thought also enters into our idea of salvation. To be saved means that we are rescued from the slavery of sin and brought into the delightful liberty of the servants of God. O Master, You are such a glorious Lord that serving You is perfect freedom and sweetest rest! You have told us that it would be so and we have found it so. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." We do find it so and it is not as though rest were a separate thing from service—the very service, itself, becomes rest to our souls! I know not how some of us would have any rest on earth if we could not employ our daily lives in the service of Christ! And the rest of Heaven is never to be pictured as idleness, but as constantly being permitted the high privilege of serving the Lord.

Learn, then, all of you who would have Christ as your Savior, that you must be willing *to serve Him*. We are not saved *by* service, but we are saved *to* service. When we are once saved, from then on we live in the service of our Lord. If we refuse to be His servants, we are not saved, for we still remain evidently the servants of self and the servants of Satan. Holiness is another name for salvation—to be delivered from the power of self-will, the domination of evil lusts and the tyranny of Satan—this is salvation. Those who would be saved must know that they will have to serve Christ—and those who are saved rejoice that they are serving Him and that thus they are giving evidence of a change of heart and renewal of mind! Come, Beloved, and when the text says, "If anyone serves Me,"

let each of us read his own name, there, and let us say, "Yes, I would serve the Lord Jesus Christ."

If we cannot read our own name there as yet, let us pray God that we may first believe in Jesus unto eternal life and then, receiving that eternal life, may spend the full force and strength of it in His service! I hope that I am addressing a large number of those who are working together with God, who have said concerning their great King as Ittai said to David, "Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there, also, will your servant be." You have taken up Christ's Cross—it has become a delightful burden to you—and you wish to bear it after Jesus as long as you live. May you be helped in that desire by the consideration of the passage before us!

First, here is *the rule of service*—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." Secondly, here is *the fellowship of service*—"Where I am, there My servant will be also." And thirdly, here is *the reward of service*—"If anyone serves Me, him will my Father honor."

I. First, dear Friends, here is THE RULE OF SERVICE—"If anyone serves Me, let him *follow* Me."

So you are proposing to yourself that you will serve Christ, are you? You are a young man. As yet you have plenty of vigor and strength and you say to yourself, "I will serve Christ in some remarkable way! I will seek to make myself a scholar. I will try to learn the art of oratory and I will, in some way or other, glorify my Lord's name by the splendor of my language." Will you, dear Friend? Is it not better, if you are going to serve Christ, to ask Him what He would like you to do? If you wished to do a kindness for a friend, you certainly would desire to know what would best please that friend, or else your kindness might be mistaken and you might be doing that which would grieve rather than gratify! Now listen. Your Lord and Master does not bid you become either a scholar or an orator in order to serve Him. Both of those things may happen to fall to your lot in that path of duty which He would have you to take, but first of all He says, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

This is what Christ prefers beyond anything else—that His servants should follow Him. If we do that, we shall serve Him in the way which is according to His own choice. I notice that many good friends desire to serve Christ by standing on the top rung of the ladder. You cannot get there at one step, young man! Your better way will be to serve Christ by following Him, by, "doing the next thing," the thing you can do—that little simple business which lies within your capacity which will bring you no special honor, but which, nevertheless, is what your Lord desires of you. In effect, you can hear Him say to you, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, not by aiming at great things, but by doing just that piece of work that I put before Him at the time." "Do you seek great things for yourself?" said the Prophet Jeremiah to Baruch, "seek them not." So say I to you.

One friend here, perhaps, blessed with great riches, is saying to himself or herself, "I will lay by in store until I acquire a considerable amount and then build a row of almshouses for the poor. I will give very largely to some new foreign missionary effort, or I will build a House of Prayer in which Christ's name shall be preached." God forbid that I should stop

you in any right design whatever! Still, if you would do what is absolutely certain to please Christ, I would not recommend the selection of any one particular objective, but I would advise you to do just this—follow Him, remembering that He said, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." You will, by simply going behind your Master, following His footsteps and being truly His disciple, do that which would please Him more than if you could endow His cause with a whole mint of riches. This is what He selects as the choicest proof of your love, the highest testimony of your regard—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

What, then, does the Savior mean by bidding us render to Him our best service by *following* Him? I would say, first, I understand by these words that we are to follow Christ by *believing His doctrine*. Our Lord says, practically, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me as Teacher. Let him sit at My feet. Let him learn of Me." Some seem to fancy that they can serve Christ by striking out a new line of thought. My dear Sir, if you do that, you will serve *yourself*, but you will not serve Christ! He has come to be the Teacher of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God and it is only by teaching the Truths which He has made known, and by publishing the message which He has revealed, that you can really be His servant. Suppose you have a man to be your servant at home—say, your gardener. He is a very industrious man, indeed, and works very hard. But when you walk round your garden, you do not see him, and for a very good reason, for he is not there. Where is he? He is at work in your *neighbor's* garden! Of course you love your neighbor as yourself, so you are pleased to think that your servant is working on behalf of your neighbor.

You smile, do you? I think you say to yourself, "That is a kind of servant that I should not care to keep. If he worked for somebody else all day long, in the time for which I paid him, I would not want him as *my* servant." Well now, if I, as a Christian minister, become a teacher of philosophy instead of a preacher of the Truths of the Gospel. If I receive into my mind some of the novel views that abound in the present day—which are not the views that are revealed in the Scriptures—then Christ is not my Master and I am not His disciple! I am a follower of somebody else. If you act thus, you are *pretending* to be Christ's *reformer*—you are attempting to make His teaching better. Impious fool! I dare not use a milder expression! You are acting as Christ's critic! You are finding fault with the Faultless! You are trying to correct the Infallible! You had better give up such a task as that, for it is not consistent with being His disciple. He requires of you that you should become as a little child, that you may be taught by Him. His own words are, "Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

If you would be a servant of Christ, come to Him as a little child! Sit on the infants' form to be taught by Him the Gospel A B C. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me—follow Me as My disciple, regarding Me as his Teacher to whom he bows his understanding and his entire mind, that I may fashion it according to My own will." This is the language of our Lord and I would impress it very earnestly upon you all—and especially upon any who are beginning the Christian life. If you are to serve

Christ, put your mind like a tablet of wax under His *stylus*, that He may write on you whatever He pleases! Be you Christ's slate, that He may make His mark on you. Be His sheet of paper on which He may write His living letters of love. You can serve Him in this way in the best possible manner.

But next, I think that the text means, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by *obeying My commands*." A fortnight ago, we considered that most instructive text, [Sermon #2317, Volume 39—*Obeying Christ's Orders*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org] "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I would bring that text to your notice, again, and ring it like a bell—"*Whatever* HE says unto you, do it." If you want to truly serve Christ, do not do what you suggest to yourself, but do what He commands you! Remember what Samuel said to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." I believe that the profession of consecration to God, when it is accompanied by action that *I suggest to myself*, may be nothing but will-worship—an abomination in the sight of God! But when anyone says to the Lord, "What will You have me do? Show me, my Master, what You would have me do"—when there is a real desire to obey every command of Christ, then is there the true spirit of service and the true spirit of sonship. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, running at My call, following at My heels, waiting at My feet to do whatever I desire him to do."

Dear Friends, this makes life a very much simpler thing than some dream it to be. You are not to go and carve a statue out of marble by the exercise of your own genius—if that were the task set before us, the most of us would never accomplish it! But you have just to go and write according to Christ's own example, to copy His letters, the up-strokes and the down-strokes and to write exactly as He has written. The other day, I was asked to sign my name to a deed and when it was handed to me, I said, "Why, I *have* signed my name!" "Yes," said the one who brought it, "you have the very easy task of marking it all over again." Just so, in that case I followed my own writing and you have the easy task of writing after Christ, blacking over, again, the letters that He, Himself, has made, and you cannot do Him better service than this. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; that is, let him do just what I bid Him to do."

Now, thirdly, I think that by these words our Lord means—and this is the same thing in another shape, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by *imitating My example*." It is always safe, dear Friends, to do what Christ would have done under the same circumstances in which you are placed. Of course you cannot imitate Christ in His miraculous work and you are not asked to imitate Him in some of those sorrowful respects in which He suffered that we might not suffer. But the ordinary life of Christ is, in every respect, an example to us. Never do what you could not suppose Christ would have done. If it strikes you that the course of action that is suggested to you would be un-Christly, then it is un-Christian, for the Christian is to be like Christ! The Christian is to be the flower growing out of the Seed, Christ, and there is always a congruity between the flower and the seed out of which it grows. Keep your eyes fixed on your heavenly Model and Pattern, and seek in all things to imitate Christ. If you want to serve Christ, repeat His life as nearly as possi-

ble in your own life. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by copying My example."

Once more, I think the Savior means this—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by *clinging to My cause."* Cling to the cause of Christ, dear Friend. Give yourself to that Kingdom for which you are taught to pray and be ready to make any sacrifice, whatever, that you may advance and extend it. Yes, throw your whole self into the holy service of your Lord. Make the name of Christ to be more widely known and the cause of Christ to be further extended among the sons of men. Cling to the cause of Christ and so carry out His own Words, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

Beloved, I believe that every Christian person should follow Christ in the waters of Baptism and, having done that, should join the Church of Christ, not so much to follow the Church, as to follow Christ. We are not to follow men, even the best of men, any farther than they follow Christ. But we must take care that we do boldly stand up as adherents of His cause, so that, if it is asked, "Who is on the Lord's side?" we may put in an appearance, directly, and avow ourselves as His followers. Are you living in a village where there is no congregation of the faithful? Then let it be known that you are on the Lord's side—and do your best to open a place where Christ can be preached. Do you live down some dark part of this city where nobody goes to a place of worship? Such places are, alas, very common in this dreadful London. Then, be sure that you go to the House of God and your very going there will be a form of serving Christ, for others will see that you, at least, take a decided step and join in public worship with the avowed followers of Christ.

If you would really serve Christ, come right out from the world and say, "Let others do as they will. As for me and my house we belong to Christ and we will never hide our colors. We will bind the scarlet thread in the window and we will let all who come by this way understand that here live those who have been redeemed with precious blood and who, therefore, cannot—*dare not* and *will not* conceal the gracious fact!" "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by taking up My cause and working for it with all his heart."

I hope that I do not need to dwell any longer on this point. You all see that the way in which to serve Christ is not a visionary one. You do not need to run away from your father and mother and leave your home and friends. You do not need to go away to the natives in Africa in order to serve Christ. It is not the getting of some idle speculation in your own brain—and working that out according to your own whims and fancies that constitutes service of Christ! It is simply this—if any man will *serve* Christ, let him *follow* Christ. Let him put his foot down as nearly as he can where Christ put His foot down. Let Him tread in Christ's steps, be moved by His Spirit, actuated by His motives, live with His aim and copy His actions. This is the noblest way in which to serve the Lord.

II. Now secondly, and briefly, let us notice THE FELLOWSHIP OF SERVICE—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also." I do not know any other master but Christ who ever said that. There are some places where an earthly master does not want his servant to be—he must have some room to himself and some

engagements which he cannot explain to his servant—and into which his servant must not pry. But the Lord Jesus Christ makes this the glorious privilege of everyone who enters His service that, where He is, there shall His servant be!

And where is He, I pray? He is in Heaven and we cannot go to Him, there, until He calls us Home. But where is He? Where was He when He spoke these words? He was, first, *in the place of consecration.* The Lord Jesus Christ stood before the Father a consecrated Man. All that there was in Him was dedicated to the Glory of God. Now, go and serve Him by following Him, and He will put you into the place of dedication, consecration, sanctification! You desire to be holy? Well, you will never attain to holiness simply by lying in bed—get up and work for Jesus if you are able to do so! And you cannot get holiness merely by studying books—serve your Lord and serve Him especially by following Him! It is in the sacred process of active obedience, or of passive obedience, that we get the consecration which is not to be found, as some think, by merely willing it and talking of it, but which grows out of holy *service.*

As rivers, when they take up sewage, are said to drop it as they flow and purify themselves as they run, so, assuredly, it is with a Believer as he flows on in his Christian course. God blessing him, he drops much of the earthiness which he has taken up in his progress through life and, by the very motion, he seems to purify himself, refining as he runs. I notice that people who have nothing to do but to sit and stare into the black hole of their own nature are generally very sad and not often very virtuous. But they who, knowing how dark and sinful their nature is, trust Jesus for salvation, and then spend their lives in doing the will of the Lord—these are they who are both holy and happy!

But where is Christ?—for He says, "Where I am, there My servant will be also." He is and always was *in the place of communion with God.* He was always near to His Father. He often spoke with God. He always had the joy of God filling His spirit. And you, perhaps are saying to yourself, "I wish that I had communion with God." Well, through Jesus Christ it is to be had by serving Him in that particular kind of service which consists in following Him! If you want to walk with God, why, of course, you must *walk!* If you sit down in idleness, you cannot walk with Him—and if you do not keep up a good brisk pace, He will walk on in front of you and leave you behind, for the Lord is no laggard in His walking. Therefore, you see, there must be diligent progress and activity in service in order that we may keep pace with Him and have communion with Him. And if we act thus, here, He has promised that we shall be in the place of communion with our blessed Master.

Further than this, our Lord Jesus Christ was *in the place of confidence.* Whenever Christ went to work, He worked with assurance. He never had a doubt as to His ultimate success. No haphazard work ever came from Christ's hands. He spoke with certainty and He worked with the full assurance that His labor would not be in vain. If you want to have confidence in your work for Christ, so as to perform it without any doubts and fears, you will have to obtain it by serving Him—and serve Him by following Him. And then, into that hallowed place of confidence where your Master always stood, there shall you also come.

Our Lord stood, too, *in the place of holy calm*. How unruffled He was at all times! His was a life of storms, yet a life of peace. All around Him moved, but He was the Rock of Ages and never moved. Would you not like to be calm as Christ was, to dwell with Him on the serene heights while the tempests roll and thunder far below your feet? Well, then, serve Him by following Him and, as you do so, the promise of the text shall be fulfilled to you, "Where I am, there My servant will be also."

And oh, blessed be His name! He has actually gone *into the place of conquest and victory in the eternal world!* And you and I shall be there with Him in His own good time. "Where I am, there My servant will be also." Count it no dishonor to be servants when this high favor is promised you, that where your Master is, there you shall be also! I have sometimes thought that if I could get into Heaven somewhere behind the door, and just sit there, I would be perfectly satisfied. But far more than that is promised to us! Wherever Christ is, there shall we be! If He is on a Throne, we shall be enthroned, too, and, if He is at the Father's right hand, we shall be at the Father's right hand, for He has promised, "Where I am, there My servant will be also." You need not to know much about Heaven—it is where Christ is, and that is Heaven enough for us! If we could once go into the courts above and ask, "Is my Lord Jesus here?" and they should answer, "No, He is not here," it would be no Heaven to us, would it? We would want to go outside the city walls and cry, "Show me where He is."

But suppose it possible for us to be in the very lowest room of Heaven, where the glories were veiled, as it were—if such a place could be—and if we could hear one truly say, "There He is," its glories would not be any longer veiled and we should need no higher Heaven than that! As soon as ever we saw Him, we would say, as our Friend did in prayer, "He is all the Heaven we want to know." Remember that blessed verse we had in our reading, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory"?

This, then, is the great fellowship of holy service—who would not be a servant of Christ?

III. Now, as our time is nearly spent, I must speak but briefly upon THE REWARD OF SERVICE, upon which I have already entrenched —"If anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor."

It is very sweet to notice how the Lord Jesus brings His Father into His speech. It is as if He said, "When a man joins himself to Me, then he joins himself to My Father, also. It is not only I who will love him and do My best to honor him, but My Father, the great and ever-blessed Lord over all, keeps an eye on that man." On whom does He look with this gaze of approval? Not on those who have some grand project of serving *themselves*, but on those who serve Christ and who do it by following Him! Come, dear people of God, you are, many of you, very poor, yet I know that many of you are seeking to serve Christ by following Him. Some of God's dear servants here are not great speakers—they are very quiet, humble Christians—but they are trying to do what Christ would do if He were in their position. If this is your case, dear Friends, you are honoring your Lord and the Father, Himself, looks approvingly upon you!

"If anyone serves Me," says our Lord, "him will My Father honor." How will He do it? Well, He will honor him *by letting him know his sonship*. Because Jesus always pleased the Father, the Father bares witness to Him, saying, "This is My beloved Son." And if you serve Christ by following Him, the Father will often bear witness in your heart and say, "This, also, is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." He will often cause the Spirit of adoption to renew the witness in your heart so that you will cry, "Abba, Father," and He will acknowledge the kindred. Surely, there is no greater honor than for God to acknowledge you as His son!

Next, He will honor you *by giving you a sense of approval*. You know what that means. I will tell you when it is very sweet. You have been doing something for Christ. You have done it with all your heart and some friend picks holes in it—and someone not quite so much a friend and who, therefore, cannot so sorely wound you—begins to impute wrong motives and to judge you for having come down to the battle because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart. Well, you lose a friend and you get a double number of enemies round about you. Yet in your heart you feel that you did it only for Christ. Well, then, at such a time it is delightful to have a sense of the approbation of God such as you never had when you had the approbation of men!

Sometimes when even Christian people cry, "Well done, well done," the Lord says, "That is quite enough praise for him. I shall not give him *My,* 'Well done.'" But when you get no, "Well done," from men and, on the contrary, are misunderstood and misrepresented, then the Lord comes and puts His hand upon you and says, "Be strong, fear not, I have accepted your service. I know your motive and I approve your action. Be not afraid of them, but go your way." Ah, Beloved! Such approval as that is the highest honor we can have here! "If anyone serves Me," says Christ, "him will My Father honor" with a sense of sonship and with a sense of approbation.

If any man serves Christ there is another kind of honor that often comes to him, and it is not to be despised. If a man will serve Christ by following Him, *the Father will give him honor in the eyes of the blood-bought family*. There are certain of the Lord's people who do not carry yardsticks with them, but they carry scales and weights. And if they do not measure by quantity, they measure by quality—their approval is worth having. They are often the poorest and most afflicted members of the Church, but, being the most instructed and living the nearest to God, to be had in honor of them is a thing worth having! I believe that if any man will live the life of a Christian, however few his talents, and if his service lies in close obedience and imitation of Christ, the real saints, not the mere professors, especially not the shining worldly ones among them, but real saints will say, "That is the man for us! That is the woman with whom we like to converse." Thus it comes to pass that those who really serve the Lord by following Him have honor in the estimation of those who sit at meat with them at their Lord's Table.

And then, at last, when we come to die, or when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, or when we enter upon the eternal state, *what a glorious thing it will be to find the Father ready to honor us forever because we served the Son!* Our reward will not be of debt, but of Divine

Grace—it is Grace that *gave us the service* and Grace that will reward us for our service! No man and no woman shall serve the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth by following Him without finding that the Father has some special honor, some rich and rare reward, to give to such soldiers in due time! This is the fighting day—expect nothing now but bullets, bruises, wounds, scars! But the battle will soon be over and when the war is ended, the King will come and ride up and down the ranks—and in that day you who have been most battered and most wounded in the battle shall find Him pause when He reaches you—and He will fasten on your breast a star that shall be more honor to you than all the Victoria Crosses that have decorated brave men here below! Stars and garters they may have who want them, but blessed are they who shall shine as the stars in the Kingdom of our Father! And this honor is to be had by that Believer who will faithfully serve His Lord—not by any who merely talk about it, or dream of it, or propose to do it—but to those who serve Him by following Him, this honor shall be given.

I have preached all this to God's people, but I have not said anything to you who are not His people. I cannot invite you to His service as you are—how can you serve Him while you are His enemies? I do not invite you unconverted people to work for God. Oh, no! He wants no such servants as you are! He will not have rebels in His host. First bow your knee in submission, lay down the weapons of your rebellion—then fly to Christ for mercy! Trust in Him for forgiveness and then, but not till then, you may come and serve Him, and follow Him, and expect that His Father will honor you as He has promised. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—625, 262, 785.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.

This chapter contains the marvelous prayer of our Great High Priest. May the Holy Spirit apply its teaching to our hearts as we read it!

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.* The great design of Christ, all through His life on earth, was to glorify the Father. He came to save His people, but that was not His first or His chief aim. It was His objective, through the salvation of myriads of the sons of men, to glorify the Father.

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Here we have both the universality and the specialty of the work of Divine Mercy. Christ has power over all flesh—men are in the power of the one Mediator, but there is this special objective ever before Him—"that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* This does not mean mere head-knowledge, but to know in the *heart and soul* the one only true God and Jesus Christ who was sent of Him to the sons of men, "this is life eternal." God without Christ brings not eternal life, and Christ, if He were

not sent of God, would not bring eternal life to us, but knowing God in Christ Jesus is eternal life.

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* Here our Savior speaks by anticipation. He foresaw that He would pass through His passion, that all the work of His people's redemption would be fully accomplished. And in this, His final prayer on earth to the Father, He could truly say, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." May you and I be able to say the same when we depart out of this world! Not boastingly—there was no boasting in our Lord—but truthfully, conscientiously—from the bottom of our heart may each one of us be able to say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do"!

5. *And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own Self with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* After the finished work, Christ was to have the Glory. O worker for God, seek not glory before your work is done! Expect not honor among men because you have begun the work so earnestly. Plod on until it is finished, then shall the glory come. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward," said our Lord concerning the scribes and Pharisees who sought the praise of men. But you have not your reward at present—it is yet to come. Wait for it, for it is sure to come.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* How tenderly He speaks about them! He says the best He can of them. They were faulty, feeble folk, but He says, "They have kept Your Word." So they did. Oh, that you and I may do the same, and not be swept away by the drift of the current of unbelief! If we are not perfect. If we fail in some respects, yet may the Muster be able to say of us to God, "They have kept Your Word"!

7. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.* How the blessed Christ loves to lay aside all honor to Himself even in His own Gospel! He said that the things which He had taught to His disciples were not His own—they were the Father's. The Father always honors the Son and the Son takes care to always honor the Father.

8-10. *For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* Every true child of God glorifies Christ! And if you cannot say that you are glorifying Christ, you should question whether you really belong to Him. If you are His, it is true of you, "I am glorified in them"—not only *by* them, but *in* them—"their suffering with patience, in their laboring with diligence, in their faith, in their trustfulness in Me, 'I am glorified in them.'"

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world*—We also know that we, too, are in the world. We have good reason to feel it and sometimes to mourn it.

11. *And I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* When God

keeps us, He keeps us in unity—our divisions are not the result of His work. When we get away from His keeping and get away from His Word, then we are sundered in heart from Him and from one another. But by His keeping He keeps His children one.

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* The Scripture was fulfilled in the preservation of His own—and also fulfilled in the destruction of the traitor. God's Word will always be fulfilled. Oh, that it may be to us a savor of life unto life, that we may be kept by it and not a savor of death unto death, as it was to Judas, who was blinded by the very Light of God that shone upon him! That fierce Light that beat about the King of Kings fell on him and it blinded him eternally. God save us from such an awful doom as that!

13. *And now come I to You.* I can only read you this wonderful chapter, but what must it have been to have *heard* it! I think I see the look on the Savior's face as He says to His Father, "And now come I to You." May something like that look be on your faces, my Beloved, when your last moments come! Looking away from your dear ones whom you must leave as Jesus left His disciples, may you, each one, be able to say, "And now come I to You"!

13. *And these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* While He drained the cup of sorrow to the dregs and went forward to all the agonies of the cruel Cross, He wanted His disciples to have His joy fulfilled in them, that they might be filled full with His joy.

14. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* This does not look like trying to please the world, to adapt our method to the spirit of the age, to come as near to the world as ever we can, to dabble in its politics and join in its schemes! This has, to me, a very different tone in it from all that!

15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world*—Christ and His people did not go together out of the world all at once. That would have been to leave the world in an utterly forlorn condition without any help whatever! So He says to His Father, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

15-16. *But that You should keep them from the Evil One. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* You cannot make Christ a worldling. Do what You will with His Character—twist it as you like—you must see that there is something unworldly, otherworldly about Him. So let it always be with His people.

17. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* Thank God for that—"Your Word is Truth." Not, "Your Word contains the Truth with a mixture of error." Or, "Your Word has some Truth in it." No, but, "Your Word is Truth." Not only is it true, but it is Truth, the very essential Truth of God!

18, 19. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself*—"I separate My-

self to this work, I dedicate, devote, consecrate Myself wholly for their sakes."

19-20. *That they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these alone*—This little handful of disciples who had been gathered to His name—

20. *But for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.* Thank God that He will bless our word as well as His own Word! When our word is based upon His Word—when we do but expound what Christ has given us to say—then men shall believe on Him through our word!

21-23. *That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the Glory which You gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.* This is a wonderful expression. Does the Father love His people as He loves Christ? Then His love to them must be without beginning, without change, without measure, without end! Oh, it would ravish your heart, it would carry you away to the very Heaven of heavens if you could get the full meaning of this expression, "and have loved them as You have loved Me"!

24. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.* This is Christ's last will and testament—"Father, I will." It is not merely His prayer, but He makes this as one clause in His will, that all whom the Father gave Him should be with Him to behold His Glory. And it will be so, Beloved. He will not lose one of His own. He will never drop from those dear pierced hands any portion of the eternal gift of His Father!

25, 26. *O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* Here the doctrine becomes a matter of experience! May we never rest till we get the full experience of it, that the very love which God gives to Christ may be found in our hearts shed abroad by the Holy Spirit! Amen.

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THE JOY OF REDEMPTION
NO. 2450

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"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 in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." Isaiah 44:23.

WHEN the human mind is on the stretch of emotion, whether it is under the influence of grief or joy, it often thinks that the whole world is in sympathy with itself. It seems to wrap the mantle of the universe round about its spiritual nature as a garment. If it is joyous, it puts on nature as a spangled robe, but if it is wretched, it finds its sackcloth and ashes in the world round about it. You know how the Prophet—poet as well as Prophet—says of us in our joyous moments, "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." When the heart is happy, nature seems to ring marriage peals in unison with the music within the heart. Let the eyes be clear and all nature will be bright! The earth seems glad when we are so.

On the other hand, it is a part of the nature of grief to be able to transpose itself into the world around. Does not old Master Herbert cry—

"O who will give me tears? Come, all you springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain:
My grief has need of all the watery things
That nature has produced. Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

Gladly would he make the world weep with him when he wept, as others have made the world sorrow when they grieved, and rejoice when they were full of joy. The fact is, the world is one great organ and it is man that plays it—and when he is full of joy and gladness, he puts his tiny fingers upon the keys and wakes the world to a majesty of joy! Or if his soul is gloomy, then he plays some pensive, dolorous dirge and thus the outside world keeps pace with the other little world within.

The Prophet, in this chapter, had been studying the great redemption which God had worked for His people, and he was so happy and delighted with it, so overjoyed, so charmed, so enraptured, that he could not help saying, *"Sing, O you heavens."* There were the angels looking down on man with eyes of sympathy. "Sing," he said, "you angels, that sinners can be saved, yes, that sinners *have* been saved! Rejoice to think

that repenting sinners can have their sins forgiven them! Sing, you stars, that all night long, like the bright eyes of God, look down on this poor world, so dark but for you! Sing, for God has blessed your sister star, unwrapped her from her gloom and made her shine more radiant in mercy than any one of you! Sing, O blue sky of profound heights! O you unnavigated ether, be you stirred with song and let space become one mighty mouth for melody! Sing, O you heavens!"

Then, when he must come down from those lofty heights, he looks upon *the earth* and he says, "O earth, echo, echo with song, and you lower parts of the earth, you valleys and plains, the sea with its million hands, the deep places of the earth and the hollow caverns thereof—let them all sound with joy because Jehovah has redeemed man and, in mercy, has come down to His poor erring creatures." And then, as if he heard all earth getting vocal with the voices of happy ones, and felt it would not do for the praise to be limited, even, to the tongues of men, he thinks of those mountains where man cannot climb, those virgin snows, undefiled by human feet, and he says, *"Sing, you mountains!"* Then he thinks of the shaggy woods upon their brows and he bids them sing in admiration—"*Sing, you forests!* Let every tree break forth in melody!"

Do you catch his thought? Do you not see how the great poet-Prophet, in a mighty fervency of delight, wakes the whole earth and even Heaven, itself, to one mighty burst of song? And what is the subject of it? "The Lord has redeemed His people, and glorified Himself in Israel." Oh, that I could stir in your hearts songs of joy for the redemption which God has worked for His people and for the Glory which God has gotten to Himself by this wonderful act of Divine Grace!

There are three redemptions which may well make all hearts rejoice. The first is *redemption by blood.* The second is *redemption by power.* And the third is the completion of the two—*redemption in perfection.*

I. The first is, REDEMPTION BY BLOOD. You know the story. Man had sinned against his God and God, the Just One, must punish sin. But it was agreed that if a plan could be devised by which Justice should be satisfied, Mercy should have full play for all her kind designs. What a day that was when the Eternal Wisdom revealed to man the plan by which the Son of God should suffer instead of us, so that Justice might have its claims discharged in full, and yet Mercy enjoy its boundless, unlimited sway! Sing, you heavens, because of the wisdom which devised so benevolent a scheme! Rejoice, O earth, because of the marvelous, matchless understanding which framed so wise a plan!

The terms or preamble thus agreed upon, it was necessary that some-one should suffer instead of man in order that man might escape. *Will the Eternal Son undertake to do this?* He is God. His Glory is excessive. Angels veil their faces as they adore Him. Is it possible that He will ever become a Man—to bleed, to be spit upon, to be scourged, to be crucified? Will He undertake to do it? He said unto His Father, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God!" Sing again, you heavens! Let your hallelujahs rise aloft, you angels! The Son of God has undertaken the redemption of men! That which was once only a scheme has now become a Covenant! That which was but a

plan in the Divine mind is now a compact between the Father and the Son!

But though Christ has undertaken it, *will He perform it?* The years roll on, the world gets gray, and yet He does not come. But all of a sudden, when shepherds were keeping their flocks by night, there was heard a sound up yonder and straightway a multitude of the heavenly host appeared, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" What does this means? It is Jesus, the Son of God, come to do what He undertook to do—and there He is, lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths and God is born into the world! God has become flesh! He, without whom was not anything made that was made, has come down to tabernacle among us, that we may behold His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, and yet a Man of the substance of His mother, like ourselves! Sing, you angels! Let the carols of that first Christmas night never cease, for that which was once a scheme, and then a Covenant, has now commenced to be a work in real earnest!

He has come to do it, *but will He ever fulfill it?* Will He ever accomplish the stupendous obligation? Thirty-two years roll over Him, during which He is despised and rejected of men, the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. But will He ever achieve that last, that dreadful task? Will He ever be able to perform it? Will He give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair? Will He, verily, be led like a sheep to the slaughter? Can it ever be that the Lord of Life and Immortality will actually die the death of a criminal and be buried in a borrowed tomb? My Brothers and Sisters, not only will it be, but it has been! Recall to memory that eventful night when Judas betrayed Him with a perfidious kiss, when, in Gethsemane, He was covered with a bloody sweat, a sweat caused by your sins and mine! Do you not see Him led away by those who have arrested Him? Do you not see the Lord of Glory mocked and set at nothing, made an object of ridicule, the jeer of sarcasm and the butt of scorn?

"*Ecce Homo!*" Behold the Man covered with an old robe, the cloak of some common soldier—and His back laid bare to show you that it is covered with another crimson, the crimson of His own most precious blood, fetched by the accursed scourge from those blessed shoulders! Do you see Him staggering along beneath the weight of that heavy Cross, hurried and hounded through the streets of Jerusalem? Do you mark Him as He bids the daughters of Jerusalem stop their tears and weep not for Him, but for themselves and their children? Can you not see Him as they fling Him on His back, stretch out His hands and feet to the wood—and then drive the cruel nails through their most tender parts? Can you not see Him as they lift Him high between earth and Heaven and then dash the Cross into its place, dislocating all His bones, till He cries out, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. You have brought Me into the dust of death"?

Yes, He is accomplishing it all! Jehovah's wrath is pouring over Him, wave after wave, and He is meekly bowing His head to it all! Jehovah's sword is being driven into His heart and He is baring His breast to receive it—for your sakes and for mine! Sinner, He does it altogether. He

can do it! He is doing it! *He has done it,* for He bowed His head, saying, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost! That which was first a purpose, then a Covenant, and then a work initiated, is now a work achieved! Jesus Christ has redeemed His people with His own most precious blood!

But they took His mangled corpse down from the Cross. They put it in the tomb. It remained a question whether He really had accomplished the work, for if He had, God would set two seals to it—first, by His rising from the tomb, and secondly, by His ascending into Heaven. See then, Believer! On the third day, the mighty Sleeper unwound His grave-clothes! An angel came from Heaven and rolled away the stone and, in the glory of a life unshackled by the trammels of vanity to which our poor creatureship is made subject, He rose from the dead! And when He had shown Himself to His disciples and to others for 40 days, He took them out to Olivet. And as He communed with them and blessed them, He went up into Heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight! Can you not, in the devout exercise of imagination, track Him past those clouds? Do you not see Heaven's heroes as they meet Him and welcome Him? See you not His chariot waiting for Him? Do you not behold Him as He mounts it and they sing in advance of Him till they come to the crystal gates and then, from over the gates, the watchers cry, "Who is this King of Glory?" while others shout, "Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in!" Yes, in He rides, up to His Father's Throne, and there He sits in state, God over all, blessed forever, the Lamb once slain, no more to die! Sing, you heavens, and be glad, O earth! The work which was accomplished is accepted. The deed which was finished is stamped and recognized by Heaven and now there is peace "through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant."

Ah, I know what would make some of you very happy. Should you come, tonight, to the Cross, look up and trust Christ to save you—your joy would then be unspeakable! Never did a soul trust Christ in vain. You would receive pardon, you would get peace, you would feel as if Heaven did sing and as if earth did rejoice! You would say, "Here am I, a poor, guilty sinner, having nothing to trust to of my own, but I know my sins were laid on Christ! And if they were laid on Christ, they cannot be in two places at one time—consequently, they cannot be put on me when I trust in Jesus! They were put on His bleeding back and they are gone! There is not one left in the Book of God against me."

O dear Hearer, if you believe in Christ, you are perfectly absolved. You need not a priest to say, *"Absolvo te"*—"I absolve you." There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus! Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Jesus died? If you rest in Jesus Christ, He has paid all your debts and you are out of debt! Christ has discharged all your liabilities and you are free! Let your soul, then, be happy! Let your soul be so happy that it transfers its joy to all nature and makes Heaven and earth glad with its own gladness!

This is the first redemption—redemption by blood.

II. Let us strike another key and celebrate the second theme that redemption unfolds—REDEMPTION BY POWER.

Those for whom the Savior shed His blood and so redeemed them by price, are, by-and-by, redeemed by power. The Spirit of God finds them, like other men, fond of sin. Like other men, blind to the beauties of the Savior, deaf to the commands of Christ. But if Christ has bought them with His blood, He never paid for what He will not have. The price was too precious to be paid for those who are not saved. If Christ has paid His blood for a soul, He will have that soul! Neither will God's honor rob Him of His purchase, nor will Christ be content to lose what He so dearly bought.

This second redemption, which is conversion and regeneration, is equally a subject of holy joy. Very briefly I will set it forth. What sort of people are those whom Christ saves? Why, *some of them were the very worst of the worst.* Some of them were the companions of the lost. No, they were lost themselves! But when the Grace of God met with them, it washed them and made new men of them. There is many a man who has been a captain in the devil's service, but whom the Lord has taken and made a valiant man for the Truth. Oh, what a great sinner John Newton was before his conversion! You who have read his life know that he went about as far as a man could go. What an offender was John Bunyan before this Lord met with him! What a blood-thirsty wretch was Saul of Tarsus! What a horrible life had the thief led with whom Christ met at the last!

Now, when I think of these being saved, I feel as if I could say, "Sing, you heavens, and be joyful, O earth!" Sometimes, at our Church meetings, when some Brethren have told the story of their past lives, we have felt inclined to stop and sing! Some have said, "I never entered a place of worship for years. I cursed at the very thought of it! The Sabbath I never regarded. Yes, the very name of God, Himself, I despised. But Eternal Mercy met with me!" "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 in it! For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." Yes, and the greatest wonder to every one of you will be that ever God's mercy saved you!

I can understand very well His saving any of *you*, but I often cannot comprehend why He should save me. Oh, this will be the wonder of Heaven to each one of us, to find ourselves there! And how will we say, "Sing, O Heaven, and be joyful, O earth!" if once our poor guilty feet tread that golden pavement and if, once being washed in the precious blood of Jesus, we shall be permitted to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven! Oh, the joy to think that such sinners should be saved!

Does it not enhance the joy that *they were in such a miserable plight before they were saved?* They were prejudiced against the Gospel, but God knew how to knock their prejudices over! They were blind and would not see the beauties of it, but the Lord has a blessed way of opening blind eyes! Their hearts were as hard as granite, but God knew how to use the hammer and shiver the rock in pieces! Very likely they derided the very idea of being converted and yet they were made partakers of the saving change! Yes, and I have noticed that some of the most hardened are the very first who are met with—some of those who seemed the most

unlikely subjects of Divine Grace have been chosen by Divine Sovereignty and have been made wonders of Divine Power! Herein lies the matter that makes us sing and rejoice because the blind have been made to see, the deaf have been made to hear and the dead have been made to live! O you forests, sing of this wonder of mercy!

And still further, think of *what these souls are saved from.* But for Grace, the very hottest Hell would have been our portion—but we are saved from it. We should have been made to drink of the bitter cup of wrath forever—but we shall never drink a drop of it now. And then consider *what the man of God is saved to*. He is saved for Heaven. He is made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! His head shall wear the crown. His hands shall sweep the strings of harps of gold. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth! Saved from Hell and lifted up to Heaven, let the bass notes of our songs go down to Hell and make the devils grind their teeth with rage! And let the alto notes go up to Heaven and make even the angels glad as they see how sinners saved exult in Jesus' name!

Mighty as is the power, are we not often constrained to marvel at the weakness of the instruments which the Lord employs? Sometimes a soul is saved by Christ's Grace through a poor preacher who is despised by many and who, in himself, is humble, weak and feeble. By means of a tract, or a quotation from the Bible, or something of that sort, the heart is turned! Any instrument in the hand of God, though it seems most unlikely, is capable of bringing a soul to Christ! Oh, rejoice, you heavens, for God is glorified in using poor instruments to work His will!

And then see how *some are saved in the teeth of ten thousand obstacles.* It seems as though they only escape by the skin of their teeth, as though all the devils in Hell came after them with their mouths open, like roaring lions, seeking to devour them! Yet the hand of Divine Grace has been upon them and they have been saved! Are not some of you perfect miracles to yourselves? Do you not wonder that you have not gone back long ago? When you see what temptations you have had and how base your hearts, are you not astonished that Divine Grace should have made you a Christian at all, and kept you in the way of righteousness until now? Oh, with tears in our eyes let us bless God that we are what we are! Let our hearts be glad, tonight, and let us make all nature seem glad as we remember the hole from which we have been spared and the mire or the clay from which we have been drawn by the Irresistible, Effectual Grace of the Spirit of God!

III. And now, lastly, what a song will that be as Heaven and earth, mountains and forests, rejoice WHEN THE BELIEVER IS PERFECTLY REDEEMED!

On earth he was still the subject of temptation and he wrestled hard with inbred sins. But when death comes, he shall be perfect! There shall not be a rag of corruption, nor a relic of the old man. Brothers and Sisters, will you not make the heavens and the earth ring when you find yourselves made like unto Christ—when you shall find that nothing that old Adam gave you is left, that all sin is gone and that you are like the angels of God? Surely there shall be no voice in Heaven more exulting,

more joyous than that of men delivered from strong passions and deep depravity, and made perfectly like the Lord Jesus!

And there we shall be perfectly free from all the cares and troubles of this mortal life. No sweat to wipe from aching brows! No tossing upon beds of weariness! No nights of languishing! No question of, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and with what shall I be clothed?" "The Lord God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." There shall be no more spiritual battles and conflicts. Death and Hell shall no more annoy us, nor sinners vex the righteous with their ungodly conversation—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,
They are forever blest."

Oh, blissful hour! Oh, happy moment when—

"We shall be near and like our God!"

Brothers and Sisters, does it not make you long to be gone when you think of the perfection of redemption? The body will be redeemed! It will rise from the dead. This poor dishonored body will be made like unto Christ's glorious body and then body and soul, together, shall, like twin angels, glorify God throughout eternity!—

"There shall I bathe my weary soul,
In seas of heavenly rest!
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

Do you not wish you had wings to fly away? Well, it is but for a few minutes that you are detained here. "Minutes!" you say. "Why, they are months and years!" Yes, but what are they? When once they are gone, they shall be but as a watch in the night! You shall think of them then as God thinks of them, now, as but a very small moment. Courage! Wait with patience and you shall make all eternity sing because the Lord has redeemed His people and glorified Himself in Israel.

Alas, I fear there are some of you who will have no part or lot in this matter! If you would have this last redemption, begin with the first! Faith first! Look to the price—to the blood—and then the Holy Spirit will graciously give you the redemption which is by power! Your faith will be the first proof that you are so redeemed and will lead you on until you attain that perfection for which we groan, that adoption for which we wait, to wit, the redemption of the body! Bought with the blood of Jesus, quickened into newness of life by the power of His Resurrection and, at length gathered unto Jesus, to be with Him where He is, the joy of His salvation shall swell into a mighty chorus in which Heaven and earth shall ring out their loud-sounding music, while our tongues shall sing Immanuel's praise forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
488, 136 (SONG II), 116 (SONG III).

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 44; 55; 2 SAMUEL 23:1-5.

This evening, we will read two chapters from Isaiah's prophecy, the 44th and the 55th, and a few verses from the 23rd chapter of the second

Book of Samuel. May the Lord bless all these passages to us as we meditate upon them!

Isaiah 44:1. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen.* See, the chapter begins with a, "yet." There is a great deal in God's, "yets." Notwithstanding all the sin and provocation mentioned in the previous chapter, the Lord still reveals His mercy and goodness to His ancient people.

2, 3. *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.* Be not cast down, you thirsty souls, think not that you must perish of drought, you who are like the parched earth; God is ready to bless, and to bless largely, too—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

3, 4. *I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* God's Grace to our children is also Grace to us, for there is nothing that we desire more than to see them saved. It will be well for all of us who are parents to grasp this promise and to plead it before God—"Lord, send such floods of your Grace that our children may grow like the willow trees that flourish wherever the brooks and rivers wander!"

5. *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.* They shall come in different ways, but they shall come unto the Lord. Some can, perhaps, only write out their resolve to be the Lord's, while others can boldly speak it to whomever may hear. But they shall come when Grace is given to them.

6, 7. *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of Hosts, I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.* God claims to be the one great Source of all true prophecy. He challenges the gods of the heathen to arrange future Providences, or even to foretell what those Providences will be.

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 besides Me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any.* God Himself, who knows all things, knows of no other God beside Himself. Indeed, there is no other, and there can be no other! The unity of the Godhead must be accepted by us—we cannot think of there being two Gods, since the one living and true God fills all space. Now the Lord, through the Prophet, holds up to ridicule the unreasonableness and folly of those who worship graven images.

9, 10. *They that made a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit, and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a God?* The very question is absurd!

10, 11. *Or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workman, they are of men.* Does man make God? What kind of a god must that be that *man* can make?

11, 12. *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.* This maker of a god is faint? How utterly ridiculous is the idea that one who can make a god should, himself, be faint!

13-16. *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. 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 nourishes it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread; yes, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down thereto.* It has often happened that when this passage has been read in the hearing of idolaters, they have been convinced by it of their folly. It is a very simple description of what takes place in an idol-maker's workshop, yet, simple as it is, it shows the absurdity of the idea of worshipping that which can be made by man's hands.

16-18. *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 graven image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my God. They have not known nor understood.* There must be a failure of knowledge or understanding where such folly as this is possible!

18. *For He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.* They have been so full of sin that God has given them up to judicial blindness! And hardness of heart has come upon them as a punishment for their rebellion against the Most High.

19, 20. *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.* He is like a madman who takes to eating ashes—

20, 21. *A deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for you are My servant.* You who fear God, remember these things and keep clear of idolatry—the setting up of crucifixes, the hanging up of crosses or any kind of symbol whatever! Even though it is merely the simple triangle, or the sacred Alpha and Omega, away with it! The people of God must be clear from even the slightest traces of idolatry! See how many so-called Christian churches are nothing better than congregations of idolaters, such as the Church of Rome and even the Greek Church—the one with her images and her relics, and the other with her

pictures and her icons! We must have none of these things, for the command still stands, "You shall not make unto you any graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in the 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." In days like these in which we live, the people of God should be more particular than ever not to countenance any form of idolatry lest, by slow degrees, we come back to the old abominations which God abhors!

21-23. *I have formed you; you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you. Sing, O you heavens; for the LORD has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.* Glory be to His holy name, it shall be our delightful occupation, as long as we live, to glorify Him who "has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." Now turn to the 55th chapter of this prophecy—might we not almost say, the 55th chapter of this *Gospel*?

Isaiah 55:1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* "Ho...come you to the waters...to buy wine," says the Lord by His servant, the Prophet. It is just like it was at the wedding feast at Cana, when the servants went to the water pots and found them full of wine. God often gives us more than we even think we need! Water would suffice to quench our thirst, but the Lord adds, "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Wine and milk were among the blessings that old Jacob pronounced upon Judah—they are symbolic of the special blessings which come to Believers through Jesus Christ, who is our true Judah. He gives us joy, He gives us nourishment, He gives us everything we really need. Whatever you lack, you shall find it in Christ! You have nothing to do but to come for it. You have no money, but even if you had, the blessings are priceless, they cannot be purchased! The price of mercy is without price. This is all you have to do in order to receive it—come and take it, take it freely, come and take it now! Never did a salesman plead with a customer more earnestly than the Spirit of God here pleads with sinners, yet it is not God who is to be profited by the transaction! He gains nothing except the indulgence of His love—we are the eternal gainers by His gracious Gift, yet the Lord says, "Come you," and then again, "Come you," and then a third time, "Come." When he says, "Come, come, come," who will refuse to come?

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?* All your care, your toil, your anguish of heart are spent in a vain desire to get this world—and if you do get it, it is nothing more than bread, and bad bread, too! It cannot satisfy the cravings of your immortal spirit—why do you waste your time and money trying to get that which is not worth the having? Will you hunt after shadows? Will you pursue the wind?

2. *And your labor for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently unto Me and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* True religion gives substantial joy to the heart. It is no dream! It is a blessed

reality, as those of us know who have tried it. If you will come and have it, you shall eat what is really good and your soul shall find such a satisfaction in it that you shall delight yourself in fatness.

3, 4. *Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* These words refer not only to David, but to Jesus, great David's greater Son. The next verse is spoken especially to him, not to us, yet as we overhear it, we suck comfort for ourselves out of it.

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.* Christ must have a people. He did not die in vain. God will give Him a following! He shall not be a Commander without troops. He shall not be a Leader without disciples. I shall preach, tonight, [The exposition was always *before* the sermon. For some reason, the publishers chose to place the exposition *after* the sermon.—EOD] in strong confidence that many will be saved in this place tonight. Where there is faith, God will respond to it. Pray, you who are the people of God, that this promise may be kept! It is a promise to Christ and the Father will keep His promise to His own Son! Be you sure of this, He will glorify Him, but He would have us pray for Him. Let every heart that knows how to pray be breathing out the petition, "Father, glorify Your Son."

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.* There may come a day when He cannot be found, a time when He will not be near. When the great Judge of All has once said, "Depart." When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, in vain will be all your seeking, your praying and your knocking at the door that will never open again! Therefore, "Seek you Jehovah while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near."

7. *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.* The marginal reading is, "He will multiply to pardon." We multiply sin, but God's multiplication table goes farther than ours—"He will multiply to pardon."

8-11. *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. 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 whereto I sent it.* What comfort there is, here, for Christian workers, for you who proclaim God's Word! Yours is no haphazard business! Look at the. "*shalls*" in this 11th verse—"It *shall* not return unto Me void, but it *shall* accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." When we make known God's Word, we are not drawing a bow at a venture! We are not sowing seed which may or may not beget a harvest—*it shall, it shall, it shall.* God says it three times! He is very fond of

the number three, the Trinity is constantly revealed throughout both the Old and the New Testaments. When it is not spoken and declared so such doctrinally, you see its practical effect in the frequent threefold utterances of God.

12. *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.* There shall be demonstrative delight! All nature is in sympathy with the man who is in harmony with God! The world, itself, echoes to the joy of the little world within man's bosom.

13. *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.* We read, in the third verse, about "the sure mercies of David." To explain that phrase, let us read a few verses from the second Book of Samuel, and the 23rd chapter. I might have selected another passage, but these being David's dying words, will be the more striking.

2 Samuel 23:1-5. *Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His Word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house is not so with God.* He remembered his many sins and the many tribulations in his family which had come upon him in consequence of those sins. And the dying man felt a sad heartache, so he thought of the errors of his life—as well he might.

5. *Yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.* What blessed words his last words were! His sorrow is turned into joy! His own house grieves him, but God's promise comforts him. I think we must read this verse again. Perhaps there is some father here who is growing old, or some mother upon whom years are multiplying. May these last words of David be such as your last words may be! "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

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"BLESSED IN HIM"
NO. 2451

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 7, 1886.

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

I wish that I could speak at my very best concerning the glorious Him who is mentioned in the text, but I have hardly got into full working order after my season of rest. One's voice becomes rusty, like an unused key, and one does not, at first, feel quite at ease in speaking after a time of comparative quietude. Do not, however, think that my subject is a poor one—if there are defects in my discourse, remember that it will only be the *speaker* who is poverty-stricken—not the great King and Lord of whom he is speaking. "Men shall be blessed in Him." O Sirs, if one had the tongues of men and of angels, and if one could only, for once, use that speech which it is not lawful for a man to utter—those words which Paul tells us that he heard when he was caught up to the third Heaven—if we could even speak as never man yet spoke, we could not fully set forth all the glories of Him of whom this text speaks!

David's thoughts, doubtless, rested in part upon Solomon when he said, "Men shall be blessed in him"—and our Lord, Himself, spoke of Solomon in all his glory. But what poor stuff is human glory at the very highest! The, "Him," mentioned in the text, the higher and the greater Solomon who is truly meant in these words, has a real Glory—not of earthly pomp and fading tinsel, nor of gold and pearls and precious stones, but the more excellent Glory of Character and the true beauty of Holiness. In Him all Divine excellences are blended. I cannot hope to set Him forth as He deserves. I cannot tell you all His virtues and His glories, but, oh, He is very dear to many of us! His name is engraved on the fleshy tablets of our hearts and when we lie upon our last bed and all other things shall be forgotten in the decay of nature, we shall still remember that dear name which is above every name! The contemplation of our Savior's blessed Person shall then absorb every faculty of our being! "Men shall be blessed in Him," the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Savior, the Redeemer, the God Over All, blessed forever, who is also bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh!

As I should fail altogether to speak of Him as He deserves, I will not attempt the impossible task, but will try to speak of men being blessed in Him. That is a note a little lower. If we cannot reach the highest octave, we may attain to a lower one. Yet, while we speak of the blessing that comes from Him, let us still think of Him from whom the blessing comes, and let us remember that as all blessings come from Him, it is because all blessings are laid up in Him—because every conceivable good is stored up in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "and of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace."

I. My first remark concerning the text is that it makes mention of AN AMAZING CONDITION—"Men shall be blessed in Him." It is an amazing condition to be blessed, for, *by nature, men are not blessed.* We are born under a curse. Our first father turned aside the blessing when he disobeyed God's command and, in the early dawn of the day of our race, he darkened our sky once and for all. The curve still abides upon man, that in the sweat of his face he shall eat bread, and upon woman, that in sorrow she shall bring forth children. How much woe lies in the curse that falls upon us in consequence of our own personal sin! "Who slew all these"—these comforts and joys of life? Oftentimes, they have been slain by a man's own hands through his own sin, or through the sins of those who surround him. The trail of the old serpent is everywhere! You cannot open your eyes without discovering that man is *not* blessed, but oftentimes abides under the curse. Put that Truth of God down before you and then read the text, "Men shall be blessed in Him."

Apart from Him, they are accursed! They wring their hands and wish they had never been born—and some sigh and sorrow almost without ceasing. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward, and it is an amazing thing that any man should be blessed—so amazing, that no man is ever blessed until he comes to be connected with the Lord Jesus Christ—"Men shall be blessed in Him."

Many people who forget all about the curse, nevertheless *acknowledge that they are unhappy*. Go up and down among the whole race of men and how few you will find really happy! I believe that none are truly happy until they are in Christ, but even if they *were* happy, that is not the word that is used in our text. It does not say, "Men shall be happy in Him." It gives us a fuller, deeper, richer word than that—"Men shall be *blessed* in Him." To be more happy may be a thing of time and of this world only. I do not mean that the happiness may not be true and real, but still, compared with all that the word, "blessed," implies, the word, "happy," has no eternity, no depth, no fullness, no force in it! So that, even if men were happy, they would not come up to the fullness of the promise in our text. But, alas, the mass of men are unhappy—sighing for this and mourning for that—never blessed, but only hoping to be so. The text, therefore, comes in with its sweet silvery ring, telling that men shall

cease to be unhappy and that they shall rise even above merely being happy—they shall come to be "blessed in Him."

I regret to say that there is a third class of people who, when they rise above the curse and are not absolutely unhappy, yet nevertheless are *in a state of doubt and hesitation.* We could not positively say that they are cursed, for we hope that some part of the blessing has fallen upon them. We may not call them unhappy, yet we know that they are not eminently happy. They hope that they are saved, or they trust that they shall be safe at the last, but they are not sure that the blessings of salvation are already theirs. Our text does not say that, in Christ, this condition of luminous haze, if I may so call it—this condition of doubt and uncertainty is all that is to be attained. No, but it says, "Men shall be blessed in Him"—and no man can call himself truly blessed till he knows that he *is* blessed, till he is sure of it, till he has passed the period of dubious questioning, till he has come out of the miry and boggy country of hesitation and doubt and stands upon the firm ground of full assurance, so that he can say, "I am God's child. The Father's love is fixed upon me; I have a part and portion in the Covenant of Grace—I am saved."

Now it is to that blessed condition that the text directs our thoughts—it promises that men shall be delivered from the curse, that they shall be lifted up from their natural unhappiness, that they shall be rescued from their doubtful or their hopeful questioning—and shall even come to be blessed! God shall pronounce them blessed. He shall set upon them the broad seal of Divine approbation and call them blessed! And with that seal there shall come streaming into their hearts the sweetness of intense delight which shall give them *experimentally* a blessing to their own conscious enjoyment!

Let me tell you what Christ does for a man who is really in Him and then you will see how he is blessed.

The man who comes to Christ by faith and truly trusts Christ has all *the past rectified.* All his sins, whatever they may have been, are pardoned in a moment as soon as he believes in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. His iniquities are blotted out and are as if they had never been committed. As the cloud passes away and is no more to be seen, so the thick clouds of our sins are dispersed by Christ as soon as we believe in Him! Nor will they ever return to darken our sky. The forgiveness which God gives is not temporary, but eternal! Once pardoned, you are pardoned forever—the act of Divine amnesty and oblivion stands fast forever and ever. Is not that man truly blessed, then, who is made free from sin? David says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." This is the blessedness which Christ gives to those who are in Him, that, as for the past, in its entirety, with all its blackness, with all its aggravated sin, He has taken it upon Himself and borne the penalty due on account of it—He makes a clean

sweep of it and says of the man who trusts in Him, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you; go in peace." That is one part of the blessedness of those who are in Christ—the past is all forgiven.

At the same time, the man who is in Christ receives *present favor*. As soon as we truly believe in Jesus, there steals over our heart a delicious sense of rest according to His gracious invitation and promise, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And as we go on to serve the Lord and take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, we find rest for our souls, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light. I believe that, oftentimes, a child of God, when he realizes his union to Christ, feels so blessed that he does not know of anything that could make him more blessed than he is! He says, "I am perfectly content with my Lord and with what I am in Him. With myself, I am always dissatisfied and always groaning because I cannot entirely conquer sin, but with my Savior I am always satisfied! I am triumphant in Him and rejoicing in Him, indeed, blessed in Him."

Some of you know what a blessed thing it is to be a child of God and an heir of Heaven—how blessed it is to have the Throne of Grace where you can take your troubles and to have a Helper who is strong enough to deliver you. I spoke, the other day, with a Christian friend, and I said to him, "My life sometimes seems to be like that of a man walking upon a tight rope. The walk of faith is very mysterious—one false step, or one slip and where would we be?" My friend replied, "Yes, it is so, no doubt. But then, underneath are the everlasting arms." Ah, that is a blessed addition to the figure—there is no slipping off the rope on which God calls us to walk, but if there were, underneath are the everlasting arms, and all is well! And the Christian, when he knows that and lives as one should live who is in Christ, is, even now, a truly blessed man!

But that is not all, for he who believes in Christ has his *future guaranteed*. He does not know how long he shall live and he does not want to know, for his Father knows. God knows all that you and I may wish to know—and as He knows it, it is better than our knowing it! Whether our life is long or short, He will be with us unto the end. And as our days our strength shall be. He will sanctify to us every trial we meet and nothing shall, by any means, harm us. He will bring us safely to our journey's end and we shall go through the cold death stream without a fear! We shall rise triumphant on the shore of the hill country on the other side and we shall behold our Savior's face without a veil between forever and forever! All this is an absolute certainty if we are the children of God, for it is not possible that one of the Divine family should perish—that one bought with the blood of Christ should ever be cast away! He will keep His own and preserve them even to the end. Are they not blessed, then, and is not the text full of sweetness as to this amazing condition, "Men shall be blessed in Him"?

Where are you, you blessed men and women? Where are you? Come and enjoy your blessedness! Do not be ashamed to be happy! I believe that some Christians are a little frightened at themselves when they find that they are full of joy and if, perhaps, they should ever break through the rules of decorum and express their joy, then they turn crimson! It was not thus with the saints of old, for sometimes they spoke and sang so loudly of the joy of their hearts that even their adversaries said, "The Lord has done great things for them," and they replied, "The Lord has done great things for us; therefore we are glad!" And again they lifted up their hallelujahs. Then were their mouths filled with laughter and their tongues with singing. So let it be with you, for you are, indeed, a blessed people if you are in Christ!

II. Having thus dwelt upon this amazing condition, I now give you another keyword. The text says, "Men shall be blessed in Him." This is A WIDE STATEMENT.

Oftentimes, the greatest Truths of God lie in the shortest sentences. There is a great mass of Truth within the compass of these few words—"Men shall be blessed in Him." There are only six words, here, but to make the wide statement true *requires breadth of number*. You could not well say, "Men shall be blessed in Him," if those to be blessed were a very few. It is not possible that the Election of Grace should consist of a few scores of persons making up an especially favored denomination—otherwise the Psalmist would not speak after this wide fashion, "Men shall be blessed in Him." The Holy Spirit is not given to exaggeration and He would have put it, "A few men will be blessed in Him." But here there is nothing of the kind! It is, "Men shall be blessed in Him," meaning the great mass of the human race, vast multitudes of the sons of Adam! I believe that when this dispensation comes to an end, notwithstanding all the dreary centuries that have passed, Christ shall have the preeminence as to numbers as well as in every other respect—and that the multitudes who shall be saved by Him shall far transcend those who have rejected His mercy. The text says, "Men shall be blessed in Him." That is to say, the most of men, innumerable myriads of men shall get the blessing that Jesus purchased by His death on the Cross.

But when the text says, "Men shall be blessed in Him," it *implies great width of variety.* "Men"—not merely kings or noblemen, but, "*Men* shall be blessed in Him." Men—not working men, or thinking men, or fighting men, or this sort of men, or the other sort of men, but men of *all sorts*—"*Men* shall be blessed in Him." It is a delightful thought that Christ is as much fitted to one rank and one class of persons as to another—

"While Grace is offered to the prince,
The poor may take their share.
No mortal has a just pretense,
To perish in despair."

Christ is the Christ of the multitude! His Father says of Him, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people," but He is equally the Christ of the

most refined and eclectic. He comes with equal Grace to those who stand in the highest or the lowest earthly position. "Men shall be blessed in Him." Of course, the word, "men," includes women and children—it means the human race! "Men shall be blessed in Him." Do not, therefore, let anyone say, "I am a strange, odd person," for the text puts in this little-big word, "men," which takes you in, whoever you may be! If you come to Christ, you are included in this promise, "Men shall be blessed in Him." So that there is a width of variety implied here.

Our text also *indicates length of period.* "Men shall be blessed in Him." Men have been blessed in Him these many centuries, Christ has shone with all the radiance of Omnipotent Love upon this poor fallen world, but His light is as full as ever and, however long this dispensation shall last, "Men shall be blessed in Him." Though some of those men are, perhaps, gray with years and decrepit through age, yet the promise still stands, "Men shall be blessed in Him." And while that verse has the word, "shall," in it, why should not the grayest head receive the Divine blessing? Why should not a man who is on the borders of the grave yet lay hold of this blessed text and say, "I will trust Him in whom men shall be blessed"?

Further, the text suggests *fullness of sufficiency* concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a wonderful depth of meaning in this passage when it says, "Men shall be blessed in Him." "Oh," says one, "men shall he blessed by philosophy, or by Christ and philosophy!" Not at all. It is, "Men shall be blessed *in Him*." "But they shall be blessed in Him through trade and commerce and the like." Not so! "Men shall be blessed *in Him*." Have we not, who are half a century old, heard a great number of theories about how the millennium is to be brought about? I remember that at one time free trade was to bring it, but it did not! And nothing will ever make men blessed unless they get into Christ—"Men shall be blessed in Him." The quacks are crying up this remedy and that, nostrums old and new—but there is only one true Physician of souls! It is the Christ of God who alone has the balm that will cure the disease of sin! When He is received, the world shall be blessed. But as long as He is rejected, the curse will still remain upon the sons of men. "Men shall be blessed in Him."

Oh, that our fellow men would receive Him! Oh, that they would bow down before the Crucified and acknowledge Him as their Lord and Savior! Oh, that all would look up to His wounds, still visible in His Glory, and put their trust in Him! Then should come that glorious time when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth and every evil shall be put away. His unsuffering Kingdom must yet come! Oh, that it might come speedily! But it can only come through Himself, not by any other means. "Men shall be blessed in Him." Anything short of trusting in Him will end in eternal failure. You have noted, dear Friends, these two things, the amazing or, singular condition, and the wide statement.

III. Now I want to dwell for a minute or two, for the exaltation of our Lord, upon THE FULL ASSURANCE which is expressed in this text—"Men shall be blessed in Him."

The Prophet speaks here, my Brothers and Sisters, in a very positive manner. There is no quiver in his voice, there is no hesitancy about his speech. I am afraid that at the present moment there are some, even of godly men, who tremble for the Ark of the Lord and the hand of Uzzah is visible here and there! But the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord needs no steadying hand from you or from me—the cause of God is always safe in His own keeping. The cause of the Truth of God is always secure, for God preserves it. Let us not be afraid, neither let us be discouraged. It is a grand thing to get a sentence like this with a, "shall," in it—"Men *shall be blessed* in Him. " It is not, "perhaps they may be," but, "Men *shall* be blessed in Him." Not, "perhaps they may be blessed under certain conditions," but, "Men *shall* be blessed in Him."

This means, in the first place, *they shall not try Him and fail*. There never was a man who came to Christ who failed to get a blessing from Him! There never was one who believed in Jesus and yielded himself up to the gracious sway of the Prince of Love who did not get a blessing from Him. I have never met with a Christian yet, who, in life or in death, has said, "I have been disappointed in Christ. He has deceived me. I sought and hoped for blessedness, but I have missed it." Never can this be truly said! "Men *shall* be blessed in Him." If they really come to Him, they shall not miss this blessedness.

No, I go further and say that they shall not *desire* Him and be denied. There was never a soul that desired to be blessed in Christ and was willing to yield itself up to Christ, that Christ did ever reject! There is no one in Hell who can truthfully say, "I came to Jesus and He spurned me." And there never shall be one such, for it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." The foot that was nailed to the Cross never spurned a sinner yet. The hand that was pierced never pushed away a penitent! Christ is all invitation—there is no rejection about Him—He constantly bids sinners come to Him and this text is true for you, whoever you may be, "Men shall be blessed in Him."

I am glad to go as far as that and to say that none who ever came to Christ failed to get a blessing from Him—and that none who desire to come to Him have ever been denied by Him! But I am going still further. "Men shall be blessed in Him," that is to say, *they shall come to Christ and get the blessing*. Some, alas, will not come to Him. But, O Sirs, if any of you refuse to come, do not make any mistake about the matter! You think that by refusing His invitation you will thwart Christ and defeat the purposes of God, but that is absurd! The King's wedding feast shall be furnished with guests—and if you who are bid will not come, there are others who will! He will send His servants out into the highways and hedges to compel others to come in, that His house may be filled! Do not

imagine that the result of the death of Christ depends upon you and that it is in your power to prevent the accomplishment of the Almighty purposes of the Savior's love! No, no! "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

If you believe not, I must say to you what Christ said to the Jews, "You believe not, because you are not of His sheep." His sheep hear His voice and He knows them, and they follow Him, and He gives them eternal life, and they shall never perish. "All that the Father gives Me," He says, "shall come to Me." Not one of those whom God has given to His Son shall be left to perish! They shall all come to Him and so the text shall be fulfilled, "Men shall be blessed in Him." Do not imagine that when Jesus hung there on yonder bloody tree and groaned away His life for men, He was dying at a whim! There was at the back of Him the Eternal Purpose and the Covenant that cannot be changed—and the Invincible One who, without violating the will of men, can yet achieve the will of God, making men willing in the day of His power—turning them from darkness to light and from the power of sin and Satan unto God!

Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters—the consequences of redemption are not left in jeopardy! Those results which God has purposed will, to the last jot and tittle, be fulfilled. "Men *shall be* blessed in Him." It is not to me a question whether Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God—she *shall* do it, though I may not live to see it. It is not to me a question whether the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—they *must* become His! Let us work in this confidence and believe every promise in this blessed book. If we get down-hearted and full of fear, we are unworthy of our Lord. If we served a temporal prince with limited power, we might talk with bated breath, but the banner that gleams on high, above our ranks, is the banner of the Lord God Omnipotent—and the shout that shall be heard at the last, is this—"Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

I ask you—Is it not very natural that He should reign? If He really is Omnipotent, are not all the certainties as well as the probabilities in favor of His universal dominion? Must He not reign? Yes, says the Spirit, "He shall reign forever and ever." "Men shall be blessed in Him." There is the tone of full assurance about this blessed prophecy! Therefore, let us rejoice and praise the name of the Lord.

IV. Now, lastly, I want you with all your hearts to think of my text with A PERSONAL APPROPRIATION—"Men shall be blessed in Him."

Dear Hearers, are *you* blessed in Christ? Will you answer the question *personally*? Do not pass it around and say to yourself, "No doubt there are many who think that they are blessed who are not." Never mind about them! For the present moment, ask this question of *yourself*, "Am *I* blessed in Christ?" Some people think that they have Christ as their Savior, but their religion brings them no blessedness. They go to Church or

to Chapel very regularly. They are, apparently, a good sort of people, but a part of their religion consists in being, on the whole, as comfortably miserable as they can! As to anything like blessedness, that does not enter into their minds. Now, if my religion did not make me really happy, I would seriously question whether I was a possessor of the religion of the happy God, for "Men shall be blessed in Him."

"Oh," says one, "but we have so many trials and troubles!" Ah, that we have! Do you know a man or woman who does not have any? I should like you to mark all the doors in London where people live who have not any trouble—it will not cost you much for chalk! There is nobody without trouble! If a man could be without trouble he would be without a blessing, for in this world one of the rarest blessings—one of the richest, truest blessings that God ever sends to His children is adversity! He sends more blessings upon the black horse than He ever sends upon the gray one! It is the messenger of sorrow who often brings the choicest jewels to our door. Ah, there is many a woman who has not left her bed these dozen years, or had a fair night of rest all that long time who is truly blessed! There is many a man who is as poor as poverty can make him, shivering in the cold, tonight, and scarcely knowing where to find another bit of coal to keep his little fire alight—yet he is blessed! If it were necessary, I could get some of you to stand up and testify that though you have very little of this world's joys, and very little of temporal goods, yet you can say, "Yes, I am blessed, I am blessed indeed—

"'I would not change my best estate,
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinner's gold.'"

Well, you have that blessedness, then, enjoy it! What would you think of a man who went thirsty when he had a well in his back yard? What would you think of a person who always went about poverty-stricken though he had millions in the bank? Think of Mr. Vanderbilt standing in the street and asking passers-by for a half-penny! Yet I have seen children of God act like that in *spiritual* things. A little boy came up to me in an Italian town and asked me to give him a *soldo*—he meant a half-penny. He was quite a moneyed man, for he had a farthing in his pocket! He took it out and showed it to me and he seemed delighted with it. But then he said that it was the only one he had in the world. You might think, from the way some persons act, that they had about a farthing's worth of faith, but that is all they have. Is it not so? O you who have Christ and God, this world and worlds to come and whom God has pronounced blessed—what? Are you going to live the starveling life of the unblessed and the unsaved? I pray you, do not! Gentlemen, live according to your quality! Peers of the upper house—for you are such if you are born again—I beseech you, act in accordance with your true nobility. Has not Christ made you princes and kings? And has He not said that you shall reign with Him forever and ever? Look up, then! Lift up your heads

and say, "Yes, He has blessed me, and I am blessed, indeed! My poor spirit dances for joy because of Him!"—

"'My heart it does leap at the sound of His name.'"

"But," says one, "I have never enjoyed that." My dear Friend, if you can believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may enjoy it! To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to trust yourself with Him just as you are—to cast your guilty soul on Him. Oh, that you would do it! That one act will mark your passing from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light. That one act will be the means of your coming into the glorious liberty of the children of God and your life shall be totally changed from that time forth so that you shall joy in God by Jesus Christ our Lord! "Men shall be blessed in Him." Are you to be one of those men? God grant that you may be! The Lord add His blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—72 (SONG I), 436, 438.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 72.

This is a Psalm which relates to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, not as the Man of Sorrows, but as the King of Glory—not as David, struggling to secure the throne—but as Solomon, seated upon it, and reigning in peace.

Verse 1. *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king's Son.* Our Lord Jesus Christ is both a King and the Son of a King. He is King of kings and, therefore, our Sovereign by His own native right. But He is also our Sovereign Prince as the Son of God. Oh, that the Lord would visibly give into His hands power over all the people of the earth! "Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king's Son."

2. *He shall judge Your people with righteousness and Your poor with judgement.* It is the peculiar characteristic of the reigning Christ that He has His eyes chiefly upon the poor. Most princes rule in the interest of the great ones around them, but our King rules for the good of the poor of His people.

3. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.* The reign of Christ is the reign of righteousness, the rule of true uprightness and, consequently, it is the reign of peace, love and joy. Oh that His gentle rule were acknowledged by all the kings of this world!

4. *He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.* This is the King we want to reign over us! Oh, that the day were come for Him to take the crowns from all other heads and to wear them on His own! And to take all scepters from other hands and gather sheaves of them beneath His arms, and to be universally proclaimed, "King of Kings, and Lord of

Lords"! Then would the world's loud hallelujahs rise as with the sound of mighty thunders. O God, how long shall it be before this glorious King takes to Himself the power that is His by right?

5. *They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.* All other kings and princes and rulers pass away. Our King, alone, has an everlasting Kingdom. Where are the dynasties that have ruled over vast empires? They have passed almost out of remembrance, but the promise to our King still abides—"They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations."

6. *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.* The reign of Christ, even now, is to the poor dispirited sons of men like rain upon the mown grass! And when He shall come in His Glory, as He will shortly come, His coming shall be as blessed to this world as the gentle showers are to the grass that is newly mown.

7, 8. *In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* This is God's decree. As surely as He has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion, so surely will He make Him to "have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." I do, therefore, expect greater Glory for the Cross of Christ than any that the world has hitherto seen. The crescent shall wane and fade away in eternal night, but the light of the Cross of Christ shall burn brighter and brighter unto endless day!

9, 10. *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.* Commerce with all its wealth shall yet lend its homage to the Savior. And every ship that crosses the sea shall yet bear its cargo of praise unto His glorious name.

10. *The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.* Their barbaric splendor shall find a higher glory in being consecrated to the King of Kings!

11. *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him that has no helper.* That is what we look for as the true recognition of religion. The true recognition of religion in a State is not the setting up of some favored sect to be indulged above the rest—there is something better than that reserved for the Christ of God! He must have the first place all the world over—"All kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him."

12. *For He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper.* Again I remind you that this is the distinguishing mark of the Christ of God, that He has a special eye to the poor and needy.

13-15. *He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live.* With all our hearts we cry, "Long live the King!" And our King shall live forever—to

Him alone of all kings may it be truly said, "O King, live forever!" "He shall live"—

15. *And to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised.* One of the marks of sovereignty is the king's visage upon the coinage of the realm, and the use of His name in public prayer. And Christ claims this homage of all His followers—"Prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised."

16. *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.* The cause of Christ in the earth may be so reduced as to be only comparable to a handful of corn and that handful of corn may be, as it were, sown on the bleak mountainside; yet it shall grow and increase until it fills the whole earth! His Kingdom is without end!

17-19. *His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. Amen, and Amen.* Is not that double Amen the very mark of the Christ? Often when He preached, He commenced His sermons with, "Amen, Amen." That is, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." He is God's great "Amen, the faithful and true Witness." But interpreting the word in the other sense, do not you and I most heartily say, "Amen," and again, "Amen," to this royal prayer? "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory."

20. *The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.* This is the end of the second great division of the Book of the Psalms. It is. Therefore. most appropriately closed with this verse—"The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." But I think that David, when he had reached this point, felt that he could not ask for anything more than he had already requested in this great petition. If the whole earth should be full of the glory of God, the Psalmist would then have gained the utmost that he could desire! Is it not so with us, also? If the name and the glory of Christ did but cover the whole earth, what more could we wish for? What more could we ask of God? Till that blessed consummation is reached, let us keep on praying, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and 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.

HOPE FOR THE WORST BACKSLIDERS
NO. 2452

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 16, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1886.**

"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel." Jeremiah 3:22, 23.

SIN is quite sure to cause sorrow—and the longer the sorrow is delayed, the heavier it will be when it comes. This ship may be long at sea, but it will come home, at last, with a heavy cargo. There was never a man who broke the Law of God who had not in the end to rue it. "He that digs a pit shall fall into it and who breaks a hedge, a serpent shall bite him," is one of Solomon's sayings, and it is most certainly true. How many there are in this world who have upon them a load of sorrow which is plainly and evidently the result of their own folly and iniquity! Their sin procured it for them.

There is also a godly sorrow which comes after sin has been committed and which is not merely occasioned by the sin, but by the love of God and the action of the Spirit of God upon the heart. When God means to save a man, He usually begins by making him sorrow on account of his evil ways. It is the sharp steel needle of the Law of God that goes through the convicted heart and draws the silken thread of comfort and salvation after it! It is not God's way to make men alive, again, until they are really dead. I mean, that, *spiritually*, they must be first, slain by the Law, before they are made alive by the Gospel. It is not God's way to heal the unwounded heart, or to provide garments for those who are already clothed. Our heart must be broken and we, ourselves, must be stripped before the healing balm can be applied—and the robe of righteousness can be put upon us.

I know that what I say upon this subject will be had in small esteem by those who have not learned the evil of sin. It is to such, only, as have felt the arrows of the Lord's righteous anger rankling in their spirit that the Gospel message will come with any kind of sweetness. If any here are suffering greatly under the burden of sin—as once I was myself—if any here are crushed to the earth as once I was crushed, they will be glad to hear God's invitation of mercy and to know the way by which it may be accepted!

The other day I read in the newspaper a story which certainly surprised me and, undoubtedly, it is an instance of wonderful patience and

forbearance on the part of a loving woman. I do not think that I have heard or read the likes of it in all my days. And I should think that such action as hers never was excelled. The wretch of whom I speak must have been the meanest man who ever lived—and died without being hanged! And the woman must have been one of the most wonderful of women ever seen upon the face of the earth! According to the account I read, the man had not been long married, but he did not prosper in his profession and, feeling that he had talent and ability, he came to London with his wife's permission and consent, that he might make his way in the world. He did make his way and became, afterwards, a portrait painter of considerable eminence, so that he obtained admission into fashionable society and lived upon the fat of the land.

He had told his wife, when he wrote to her once, that if she came she might be a burden to him, so he never fetched her up to London. Indeed, he never but on that one occasion communicated with her and never sent her even a solitary sixpence! That state of things lasted for 40 years and the wife remained true and faithful to him notwithstanding all the heartbreak caused by his cruel conduct. In the process of time, he spent all his money and reduced himself to beggary—beside that, he was full of disease, yet he was mean enough to crawl to the door of the woman he had neglected all those years and, strange as it may seem, she opened it with delight and welcomed him back to her heart. She put him in her bedroom, she carefully nursed and cared for him and she wore her own life away by sitting at his bedside till he died.

Was it not splendid on her part? What monument ought not to be raised to such a loving woman as that? But I merely tell you this story in order to say that this woman's forgiveness of her unworthy husband is but a faint picture of the great love of God towards ungodly men! He feeds them and supplies their every need—they are always dependent upon Him—they could not live an instant without His permission, yet some whom I know have never communicated with their God for 40 years! Forty years, did I say? Fifty, 60, or perhaps even more years than that they have lived as if there were no God! And worse, still, they have, perhaps, only used His name for the purposes of blasphemy! They have made a mockery of holy things, they have provoked the Lord to jealousy and yet even now, though they are decrepit and old, if they are not only sick but sorry, if they are broken down and despairing, if they will but come creeping to God's door, He will say, "Come in and welcome!"

He never yet refused to receive a soul that came to Him by Jesus Christ, His Son. And Jesus Christ Himself has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, how many old sinners have come to Christ even at 80 years of age and He has never uttered a word about those 80 wicked years—but He has said to each one of them, "Come in. I died for you. Come in and welcome." There have been many, many sins of the most aggravated kind committed, yet those who committed them have been freely forgiven! What did the Lord Jesus say to Saul of Tarsus? "I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." Yet, having asked, "Why do you persecute Me?" He had nothing more to say to him by way of reproof or rebuke, but He blotted out his sin and, more than that, He counted him worthy—putting him into the

ministry—so that this very man could afterwards say, "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

I earnestly trust that God's infinite mercy and patience may be verified in the case of some whom I am now addressing, who have not yet turned to God. Pray, dear Christian Friends, that it may be so! In handling this subject I shall notice two things in my text. The first is, *the call from God*—"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." The second is *the method of obeying the call*. This is set forth in the words, "Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel."

I. To begin, then, here is THE CALL FROM God—"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

You observe that it is a call to come back to God—and that means, first, *remember Him*—begin to *think* of Him, let Him be a living God to you. Come back to Him in your thoughts. The Lord Jehovah is the greatest factor in the universe! He works all things. He is the great Unit without which all the rest of the figures would be but ciphers. He made you—you are dependent upon Him from day to day. Before long your spirit must return to God who gave it—and you will have to stand before His Judgement Seat. Why, of all the persons in the world, must God be forgotten? Why, of all the things that are, should you forgot this chief of all things, the great I AM? Do you say that there is no God? Ah, then I have nothing to do with you—your conduct in forgetting Him may be quite consistent with that declaration, though I am sure that you know better. But if there is a God and you believe that He is, begin to think of Him in due proportion. I mean that as He is the greatest of all beings, give to Him your greatest and highest thoughts. And as He is most to be reverenced, give Him your most reverent and careful consideration.

I think that I am not asking too much of you. Certainly, if you are sorry for your sin and wish the Lord to forgive you, the very first thing for you to do is to obey that ancient command, "Acquaint, now, yourself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come to you." I know that the thought of your sin sometimes troubles you—so it ought, and it will do you good to be troubled if it leads you back to the Lord against whom you have sinned! If you have offended anyone, go and confess your offense and make matters right. Perhaps you say that you do not like the person and you are not willing to go to the person. Of course you are not! But that only proves how very right it would be for you to do so! That dislike of yours has sprung out of two things—first, your having been the offender and secondly, your not being acquainted with the offended one. Now, if those two things are acknowledged, confessed and remedied, you will soon find it to be the most joyful thing in all the world to think of God! It will be your delight above all things to rejoice in Him and in all that He does. Begin, then, to think of God, for this is what He means when He says to you, "Return, you backsliding children."

The next thing is, really *turn to Him*. I know that you must have been shocked with the figure used in this chapter. [See exposition at the end of this sermon—EOD.] That sense of shame I cannot help. As God used this symbol, it

is good enough for me, and I am sure that there is an instructive meaning in it. I must turn again to that figure. We will suppose—(and, alas, bad as the case is, we need not go very far to find the likes of it)—that a woman has grievously offended against the honor of her husband. She has gone away and left him and plunged into all sorts of sin an vice. Well no, suppose that there should come to her the message, "Return. He knows it all. He realizes all that it means. He has grieved over it all, yet he says to you, Return." She says, "I have spent all. I am in rags. I have but a miserable lodging. Those who once flattered me and lived with me in sin, have forsaken me. I am a poor cast-off wretch, whom even a reformatory refuses." Then the husband writes to her and says, "Return. Return to me and all shall be forgiven you, whatever it may be."

Do you not fancy that you can see her starting to go back to him? If there is anything left in her that is worth saving, she makes haste to accept the invitation. Yet she is very timid and very much afraid. Oh, how her sad face is covered with the blushes of shame! How the tears fall down her furrowed cheeks! Sometimes she can hardly believe that such wonderful love can be exhibited to so undeserving a woman as she is. Perhaps she is troubled, and rightly troubled, by the thought that no man would do such a thing as her husband appeared to have done—and that it would not be right that he should do so. She therefore stops a while and considers the matter. Yet it is all true. Her husband is one in a million, perhaps there is no other quite as loving and forgiving as he is. "Come back," he says, "only confess your transgression and comes back to me just as you are." I think she must be a wretch, indeed, if she does not feel that she will lay all the rest of her life out in service and love to such a forgiving husband as she has!

Now, this is just how the Lord offers to deal with you. He says, "Come back. I will say nothing about the past. 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return to Me; for I have redeemed you.' I have forgiven your iniquities. I laid them all on My dear Son. He died for you, His precious blood has washed all your guilt away. Come back to Me. Come back to Me. 'I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.' Come back to Me. 'The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.' I have not put you away, notwithstanding all your sin and all your iniquity. Here is the message of My love and mercy, 'Return, you backsliding children,' for I am married to you, says the Lord your God."

Well now, in some such way as that striking figure would import, come back to your God at once, poor wandering sinner, confessing all your wrong, wondering that there should be mercy for you, trusting that what the Lord says is, indeed, true because He says it—and resolve henceforth to live and to die at His dear feet—His servant as well as His beloved. This is the way to come back to God, so I would entreat you thus to return to Him!

There is one word in this call from God which proves that *you are invited to come back just as you are.* He says, "Return, you backsliding children." I notice that He does not say, "Return, you penitent children." He pictures you in your worst colors, yet He says, "Return, you backsliding children." I also notice that He does not say, "Heal your wounds, first,

and then come back to Me." He says, "Return, you backsliding children," with all your backslidings *unhealed*—"and I will heal your backslidings."

Many sinners seem to suppose that they must make themselves better and *then* come to Christ—a most unworthy supposition and an utterly unfounded one! Come just as you are, with no goodness, or virtue, or hope of any sort—come to Christ for it all! "But all who would be saved must believe in Jesus and repent of their sins," says one. Exactly so, but Christ does *not* want *you* to *begin* the work of salvation and then let Him finish it! He never came to be a make-weight to add the last half-ounce to all that you had gathered. Come to Him with nothing and He will fill the scale! Come empty, ragged, filthy, just as you are, and believe in God that justifies the ungodly. Cast yourself on Him who came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance! Bow in humility and patience before Him who flashes the lightning of Sinai in the face of every self-righteous sinner, but who kindles the milder, genial rays of Calvary to guide every truly humble and repentant sinner into the Port of Peace and everlasting love!

Thus have I put before you the call from God—"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you THE METHOD OF OBEYING THIS CALL. There are two things in the text that are specially noteworthy. First, he who would return to God and find salvation, must distinctly *renounce all other trust except that which God Himself gives him* and sets before him in the Gospel. Listen—"Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains." Judea was a hilly country and wherever there was the peak of a mountain, or the summit of a hill, there was an idol temple—and wherever there was a grove of oaks, there would be an idolatrous shrine. Whenever the people traveled through the valleys, they kept looking up to these shrines, so their trust was in the hills and in the multitudes of mountains. They had gods everywhere, blocks of wood and stone. So the Lord said to them, "If I am to receive you back, you must renounce all this idolatry." The spiritual meaning of this passage is this—if you are to be saved by the Grace of God, you must solemnly, formally and heartily renounce all confidence in any but the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ!

First, there must be a distinct renunciation of all righteousness of your own. You are a very excellent person in your own estimation. You think yourself well up to the mark—what have you ever done that is wrong? Ah, Friend, there is no salvation for you on *that* ground! Your righteousness must in your own esteem become as filthy rags! You must acknowledge yourself to be defiled and undone or there is no hope for you! The man who clings to his own righteousness is like a man who grasps a millstone to prevent himself from sinking in the flood. Your righteousness will damn you if you trust in it, as surely as will your sins, for it is a false proud lie—there is no truth in it and no dependence must be placed upon it. There is not a man living who, by nature, does good and sins not—and the soul that sins must die. We have not, any of us, a righteousness that will stand the test of the all-searching eyes of God! And in our heart of hearts we know it is so. Therefore, away with that lie once and for all!

When I came to Christ, this matter did not trouble me, for I had not any righteousness of my own to which I could trust. And there are many poor souls who are in much the same condition in which I was. They do not want to keep the counterfeit money which they once reckoned to be great riches—they are anxious to be rid of it! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and even at this present moment I do not know of anything that I have ever been, or done, or thought, or said that I could patch up into a righteousness upon which I could place the slightest reliance! I have not anything to trust to except the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior! And, what is more, I never wish to have, and never shall have any other ground of confidence. And I am sure, Beloved, that you must build on the same foundation, or else Christ will never save you. You must altogether renounce any trust in your own righteousness.

The next thing that you must renounce is your own strength. There is many a young man whom I have known who has been going into impurity and into drunkenness. And he has been warned by kind friends to see the wrong in his course of action, but he has said, "Yes, I see it, but I shall make everything right. I shall become a total abstainer. I shall forsake evil companions. I shall keep out of harm's way. I shall be as right as a trivet, I know that I shall. I have great strength of mind and I always could command myself." Excuse me, dear Friend, but I should like very politely and very kindly to tell you that you are a fool. You have not any strength and, what is more, if you have, you will certainly be lost, for I read concerning those who are saved, "When we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." So that those for whom He died had not any strength! Believe me, dear Friend, you have not any strength.

Oh, I have seen many a young man with splendid moral principles trusting in himself! But where has his moral principle been when a woman's pretty lips and smiling face have enticed him to wantonness, or when, in frivolous company, he has been chaffed into that other glass of wine that has upset his balance of mind and has led him to say things which he never thought could have come out of his mouth? Poor Hazael was told by the Prophet Elisha of the enormities he would commit and he said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" No, he was not a dog, but he was much worse than a dog, for he was a *devil*—yet he did not know it! And there is many a man who is fair to look upon, who is like John Bunyan's tree which was green on the outside, but inwardly it was as rotten as to be only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox! You must give up your own strength—there is not much of it to give up, but whatever there is, give it all up, renounce all trust in your own strength as well as in your own righteousness!

With that must also go all trust in your own knowledge and abilities and even in your own understanding. Yet this is the bane and ruin of many men! They know so much that, like Solomon's sluggard, they are wiser in their own conceit than seven men who can render a reason. See how they treat the Bible, itself—when they open it, it is not that they may hear what God says in it—but that they may tell God what He ought to have said! When they condescend to listen to the Gospel, it is not that they may hear what the Gospel is, but that they may note how the man

preaches it. Is he an eloquent orator? Does he use fine words? That is all that many care to hear. Sirs, if I could use grand words, I would loathe to use them lest I should ruin your souls! As the Apostle Paul said, so say I, "Not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect." If I could get you to Heaven by using the plainest words that can be uttered, I would sooner do it than I would leave any to perish in their sins because I was anxious to display the niceties of language and the beauties of style!

There are some men who are so wonderfully wise that they would quarrel with the angel Gabriel, or with the archangel Michael, himself. Solomon—well, Solomon did not know everything, but these men do. According to their own ideas they not only know everything, but they know a little more besides! If ever we need anybody to rule the nation, I would undertake to find 50 prime ministers, so wise in their own esteem are many men, who are, I must add, so little and so foolish when they come to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and the unerring scales that God holds in His hand! Hear this, you great ones of the earth, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." He must become as a little child who would become a child of God. To be saved, we must not only—

"Cast our deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesus' feet,"

but we must also—

"Lay our boasted reason down,
Down at Jesus' feet,"

and ask that He may be made of God unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Now, Friends, what do you say to this? Are you willing to give up your own mind to God and simply to believe what He tells you in His Word? Are you also willing to give up self-rule? "We are our own," says one. "We may do as we like. Our tongues are our own, we may say what we like. We are free thinkers and free livers." Let me tell you that if you are saved by Christ, you shall find the only true freedom you can ever enjoy! But there must first be a complete surrender of yourself to your God. Come now, who is to rule? Shall it be His will, or your will? Shall it be His way, or your way? If it is to be your way, it will be your ruin! But if it is to be God's way, it shall be your salvation! When the Romans attacked a city and the people yielded to them, they usually drew up a declaration which ran something like this—"We, craving mercy at the hands of the powers of Rome, surrender ourselves, our houses, our goods, our bodies, our souls, all that we have, and all that we are, to be dealt with by the Roman power exactly according to its will." It was so worded that there could be no escape from it and it contained no stipulations and no conditions. And then, as soon as it was signed, the Roman conqueror, in the generosity of his power, said, "You have yielded to me, now you are free."

God demands just that kind of submission! If you are to be forgiven, you must yield yourself up body, soul, spirit, purse, heart, brain, *everything* to belong wholly to Christ henceforth and forever! I wish that yielding were over with all of you. If you would be saved, that submission must be yours. Oh, then, let it be so at once! Will you keep your sins and

go to Hell, or leave your sins and go to Heaven? Will you have sin or the Savior? Which shall it be? Oh, that the blessed Spirit may lead you to the right decision and lead you to that decision at once!

Finally, it is clear from the text that there must also be a *hearty, true-minded acceptance of God, alone, as our one hope.* Read the passage again. "Behold, we come to You; for you are the LORD our God…Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel."

There is but one living and true God! Men have made almost as many gods as there are sands on the seashore. There is, however, but one God—whose name is Jehovah—the Creator of all things, in whom we live, move and have our being. Will you have this God to be your God? Will you say, "This God is our God forever and ever—He will be our Guide even unto death"? Will you take Him to be yours, not regarding Him merely as another man's God, but henceforth as *your* God, whom you love, whom you embrace, not comprehending Him by thought, but apprehending Him by love?

Will you take God to be your God and shall He be truly yours? Notice how the text says, "*Truly* in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel." There must be no playing at this acceptance of God as our one hope. There must be no mocking of God by a pretended yielding up of ourselves to Him. It must be a true acceptance of God, to be our God henceforth and forever.

God only must be accepted as yours. There cannot be two Gods, nor two Christs. No man can serve two masters, nor can a woman love two bridegrooms. If you would be saved, you must, by a deliberate act, give up yourself, your whole self, to Christ, and take His whole salvation to be yours!

To help you to do this, let me remind you that there is a blessed Trinity in Unity. There is, first, the ever-blessed Father. What say you? Will you have this Father to be your Father? You have sinned against Him, will you crave His forgiveness for Christ's sake? Will you ask to be admitted into His house by the blood-stained door of His Son's atoning Sacrifice? Will you honor Him as your Father? Will not each of you young people from this time cry unto Him, "My Father, You are the Guide of my youth"?

The next blessed and adorable Person of the United Trinity is the Son of God. Will you have this Son of God as your Savior? He died that sinners might live—will you have His death to be your life? He poured out His blood to cleanse the guilty from every stain of sin—will you be washed in the crimson stream? Shall Christ be Prophet to you? Will you sit at His feet and learn of Him? Shall Christ be Priest for you? Will you trust Him to present His Sacrifice for you and to intercede for you? Christ is a King—will you have Him as King to reign over you? In reality, will you have Him in all His offices and in all His relationships, in the majesty of His glorious Godhead and in the humiliation of His perfect Manhood? Will you have this Man as yours? I put the question to you as one of old put it to the damsel he met at the well, "Will you go with this man?" Will you have Christ to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, so that death, itself, shall not part you from Him? If so,

have Him and welcome, for He is prepared to give Himself to every soul that is willing to accept Him!

There is a third Person of this blessed Unity and that is the Holy Spirit. Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit come and dwell in you? It is He who must regenerate you if you are to be born again. It is He who must teach you. It is He who must sanctify you. It is He who must illuminate you. It is He who must comfort and guide you. Without Him you can do nothing. The Holy Spirit is the very life of the Christian. What the Father decreed, what the Son purchased, that the Holy Spirit applies—and without that Holy Spirit, there is nothing for you. Will you obey His monitions? Will you put yourself under His superintendence? Will you resign your body to be His temple?

If you will do all this, God helping you, then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! His own word is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." With the heart, believe on Him, then let the body be washed with pure water in Baptism. Those two things the Lord Jesus Christ asks of you. Again I remind you that it is He who says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Demur not to either of these Gospel words. Come at once and do what He bids you, and enter into life, for he that believes in Him has everlasting life! And then, at once, make the Scriptural confession of your faith, as they did who heard the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Now look, Sirs, I have done, for I do not know what more I can say to you than I have said. If I did know what more I could say, I am sure that I would say it, but I will tell you how this matter strikes me. If I had come into this Tabernacle, tonight, conscious of guilt and desirous to be saved, I feel that, after hearing what has been said, tonight, I could not go out of this place without willfully refusing the Gospel invitation, if I did refuse it. May you not refuse it, but accept it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 3:1-23.

In this chapter, the sin of God's people is put in the strongest possible light. The figure used may even be said to be a coarse one, but man's sin is, itself, a coarse thing. The thoughts suggested in this chapter are not what the delicate might desire, but then there is no delicacy in sin.

1. *They say, If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and becomes another man's, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted?* God Himself seems, here, to be at a nonplus. His people had gone away from Him, they had acted unfaithfully to Him, they had joined themselves unto other gods. The case was a very difficult one. If the Lord takes these people back, will it not look like putting a premium upon sin? That is just the question that is constantly being raised. If God freely forgives great sinners, will it not look as if He treated sin too leniently? Will not free salvation, by faith in Jesus, lead to sin? The world says that it will and even the Scripture seems to raise the question—"If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and becomes another

man's, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted?" Yet Judah had been worse than the woman here described.

1. *But you have played the harlot with many lovers.* Here was an awful depth of sin, a terrible enormity of wickedness!

1. *Yet return again to Me, says the LORD.* What a splendor of Divine Love is here revealed! I do not wonder that the question should be put, "How can God act thus, and yet be just?" He can do it and yet be just, as we have often showed you, but, still, it is a very great wonder of Grace.

2, 3. *Lift up your eyes unto the high places, and see where you have not lain with men. By the road you have sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness and you have polluted the land with your whoredoms and with your wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain; and you have had a whore's forehead, you refused to be ashamed.* This was very strong, rough language, but oh, how true it was! The people had gone astray from God into all manner of filthiness and pollution. And even when God had chastened them by withholding the showers till they were threatened with famine, they did not turn to Him. They seemed to have a brow like granite, they could not be made ashamed. There may be some persons of that kind in this assembly—if so, let them notice what God says—

4. *Will you not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, You are the Guide of my youth?* Will not you come back again? You are invited to return to the Lord, in spite of your wandering, your perverseness, your abominable iniquity! Will you not remember the better days when God was the Guide of your youth? You were not always what you are now. Will you not, from this time on, cry unto the Lord, "My Father, you are the Guide of my youth"?

5. *Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?* No, that He will not! There is none so slow to anger as our God and there is none so ready to be rid of it as He is. He is a God ready to pardon, waiting to forgive, delighting in mercy. Even though the sin should be as foul as that I read to you—I seem almost to blush in the reading, as you may in the hearing—yet, black as it is, God can put it all away in the greatness of His mercy.

5. *Behold, you have spoken and done evil things as you could.* You have gone as far in sin as you could go! Only lack of power has prevented you from being even worse than you are. Yet this is the kind of people to whom God speaks in mercy, inviting them to return to Him.

6. *The LORD said also unto me in the day of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot.* Building temples to false gods on every mountain and in every grove.

7. *And I said after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.* That made Judah's sin even worse than that of Israel! She saw this great iniquity in another, and yet went and committed it herself.

8, 9. *And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she*

defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with trees. Bowing down before idols made of wood and stone!

10-12. *And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, says the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north*—What must these words be? Must they not be, "You have treated Me so ill that I will never have anything to do with you again! Even common decency requires that I should put you away from all hope forever"? No! Listen to these words and be astounded—

12. *And say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the LORD and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not stay angry forever.* Oh, the measureless mercy of these gracious sentences! Deep and black as the sin is and fearful and terrible as is the description of it, how bright, how clear is the immeasurable love which promises to put that sin away and forget and forgive it once and for all!

13. *Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord.* Confess that sad fact. Acknowledge that you have thus sinned. Into the ear of God pour out the full confession of your criminality. He cannot ask for anything less than this—surely you cannot refuse to do it! If you have thus treated Him, come and confess it with your head on His bosom, for He is willing to receive you even if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell.

14, 15. *Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you, one from a city, and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* When God once begins to pardon men, there is no end to it. He goes on to bless them with all that they need! He makes them to be like the sheep of His pasture who shall be richly and happily fed.

16. *And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.* You know that they had been accustomed to the old ceremonial religion which was full of outward rites and forms. God says that when He brings His erring people back to Himself, they shall have done with all that mere externalism. They shall come to worship God in spirit and in truth and to commune with Him without the medium of the Ark of the Covenant or an earthly priest. They shall walk before Him in the joy of their spirits—yet these, mark you—are some of the people who are described in this chapter as having defiled the House of God, and gone astray from Him to their utter disgrace!

17. *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem.* Even to that very city that had become like a harlot and was full of abominations.

17, 18. *Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel,* There is no more quarrelling when Divine Grace comes in! Israel and Judah in the old days fought against each other, but when they, alike, taste of pardoning Grace, they shall love each other.

18-19. *And they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said, how shall I put you among the children*—When God had said all this, He appears to have come to a pause and, even in His own heart the question seems to arise, How can He deal with these greatly sinful ones as His children? "I said, How shall I put you among the children"—

19. *And give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, my Father; and shall not turn away from Me.* God knew how to change the character and to change the heart so that these filthy ones who went farthest astray, should come back to Him and should become among the most holy, the most loyal, the most obedient of all His children! Oh, that His Grace might work that miracle, again, in our midst! Remember what He did for Saul of Tarsus, that transcendent persecutor, how He made him to be the very bravest of His Apostles? He can at this moment take those who form the chosen bodyguard of the devil and so change them that they shall become the soldiers of the Cross, nearest to Christ, the great Commander! The Lord, by His servant the Prophet, goes over this sad story again—

20. *Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD.* But listen—

21. *A voice was heard upon the high places.* The places where they had built the altars to the false gods—"A voice was heard upon the high places"—

21. *Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.* How pleasant to the ears of God is the weeping of His backsliding people! The happy God does not wish men to be sorrowful, but He is glad that they should be sorrowful for sin. Now that they have begun to bemoan their wanderings and their wickedness, they will come back to their God, so He says to them—

22, 23. *Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.* So they come back to Him and find the salvation which they need.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—383, 521, 544.

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

A HARD CASE
NO. 2453

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 18, 1886.

"For God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword."
Job 33:14-18.

HOW persevering is Divine love! "God speaks once." I have heard many a father say to his child, "Do not let me have to speak to you again." But the great Father has to speak again and when it is written, "God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not," we see how great is the stubbornness of the human heart! And we also see the gentleness of Divine love. When Elihu said, "God speaks once, yes twice," he meant that the Lord speaks repeatedly. Divine loving kindness has many voices. God often speaks to us in our childhood. Some of us hardly remember when first our Lord called us, as He called Samuel, saying, "Samuel, Samuel," and each for himself answered, "Here am I." We cannot forget the voices of our youth and boyhood—the messages that the Lord sent to us through loving parents and kind-hearted teachers, or the direct admonitions of the Holy Spirit. God spoke to us and spoke to us again, and spoke to us yet again—but we regarded not His voice. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear—and we were among those who would not hear even that voice to which Heaven and earth attend—that voice which even the dead will one day hear—when they that hear shall live!

Do we not admire the great patience of God with us? I am sure we ought to and if we do, it will make us repent of our negligence of the Divine voice, so that, henceforth, we shall say with David, "When you said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You." Note that, "my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." Oh, for the quick ear to catch the faintest sound of the Divine voice! Oh, for a ready heart, waiting for those tender condescending admonitions which the Lord is waiting to speak to us!

But God has voices which He uses in such a way that men must and shall hear. There is not only the patience of love, but there is also the Omnipotence of love. God does not merely attempt to make men hear, but He succeeds in doing it. When the splendor of His love makes bare His holy arm and He puts forth all His force, the unwilling heart is made

willing in the day of His power—the rebel spirit is led in chains of love a willing captive to His conquering Lord!

I am now going to speak somewhat of that matter and, keeping to our text, I want to say, first, that *man is very hard to influence for good*. His ear has to be opened. His heart has to be broken off from its evil purposes. His pride has to be conquered. There are many things to be done before men are fully influenced to their eternal salvation. Then, secondly, *God knows how to come at them*. By day or by night, by voices heard when they are in the midst of their business, or, "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds; then He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction." Thirdly, *thus the Lord accomplishes great purposes for men*—"That He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword."

I. So, then, first, let us begin with what is a very humbling consideration, namely, that MAN IS VERY HARD TO INFLUENCE FOR GOOD.

This is true, now, and it always has been true since sin entered the world, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Still is the Savior's sad complaint most true of very many, "You will not come to Me, that you might have life." The noblest, the most tender, the most potent forces spend themselves in vain upon the heart of man! It is hard as the nether millstone. It is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It does not seem, by nature, to be more amenable to heavenly influences than is the deaf adder to the voice of the charmers, for it will not listen, charm them ever so wisely.

According to the text, before God, Himself, can save men, He has to open their ears—"Then He opens the ears of men." What? *Are men's ears stopped up?"* Perhaps not their *outward* ears—there are comparatively few persons who are very deaf. The most of us can hear—we can hear the guineas jingle and are after them very soon! We can hear a complaint against our fellow men and repeat it very rapidly! We have very quick ears for some things that are not worth hearing. But towards *God*, men's ears are often stopped up! They are as if they had a film over them. As there is a veil over the heart and scales over the eyes, so is there a plug in the ear and none of us who preach the Word of the Lord can take out that plug, or get through man's ear to his heart! It is very sad that we should wear our lives away in constant thought of how to get and win men's attention. And yet, though we may succeed in exciting an apparent attention for the moment, what we have said has not penetrated the *heart*. We have hurled our javelin at behemoth and his scales have turned aside the shaft! We have done our best to awaken the conscience and to fix the Truth of God in the heart, but, if the arm of the Lord is not revealed, we have to go back and cry with the Chief of the whole College of Preachers, "Who has believed our report?"

What is this plug that gets into men's ears? It is, of course, first of all, *original sin*—that taint of the blood which has spoiled every human faculty and has closed the ears from hearing even the voice of God, Himself.

Man does not hear God's voice because he does not want to hear it. His will, his mind, his nature is altogether estranged from God.

This original sin engenders in men great carelessness about Divine things. How quickly they are awakened by talk about politics! With what attention they will listen to a lecture upon matters relating to their health, or upon the fastest method of making money! But when it comes to the *soul* and its eternal destiny in Heaven or Hell—when it is concerning the bleeding Savior and the loving Father and the gentle wooing Spirit—men think we are doting, talking fancies, telling dreams, and they pooh-pooh it all and cast it behind their backs! If it is a matter of any worth to them, they will possibly think of it tomorrow, but they scarcely imagine it is worth while to trouble themselves about it *now*. Their ears are stopped up by carelessness.

Often, too, there is another form of plug which is very hard to get out of the ear—that is, worldliness. "I am too busy to attend to religion! I am so engaged that I cannot spare time to hear about it. You do not know how fully my time is occupied. Why, even on Sunday I must look into my books and balance my accounts!" With such men the *world* is in their heart—it has filled it and taken possession of all their thoughts. God is not in all their thoughts because the world is there. I have been told that you can scarcely hear the great clock at St. Paul's strike in the middle of the day—the noise of the traffic is so great that many persons who live near have not known when it was noon. And I do not wonder at it. But you can hear the warning bell at dead of night—far away sounds the note that marks the hour because then the traffic is hushed. Alas, many men never get into that hush—they live in a noisy, clamorous, trafficking world—and this dulls and stops up their ears so that even though God, Himself, speaks, they do not hear His voice!

In some cases, the ear is stopped up by prejudice. Men do not hear the Gospel because they do not want to hear it—nor will they bring themselves to hear it. There is the preacher, for instance. They have heard such strange stories concerning him that they will not listen to him. The very people, too, who profess to love godliness—well, those who are prejudiced see faults in them—as if that were a reason why they should not, themselves, listen to the Gospel! But any excuse will suffice when you are not in earnest about anything. Yet it is a thousand pities that a man should be prejudiced against the salvation of his own soul! It would be a foolish thing for a man to prejudice himself into rage and beggary, but it is far worse when a man prejudices himself out of eternal life into everlasting woe! There are tens of thousands, yes, millions, who, from their education and surroundings and often from want of candor, would not listen to the Gospel though the angels themselves preached it! For some reason or other, they are prejudiced against angelic preaching and they would not listen to it, let it be what it might! It seems impossible, sometimes, to get a hearing with some men, even for our Lord, Himself. They have resolved, before they listen to Him, that He cannot be the Son of God. Nathanael's question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is on their lips in a moment! "Is it possible that we should derive any benefit from listening to the carpenter's Son?" So, in one way or an-

other, their ear does not fulfill its true purpose, for it is stopped up by prejudice.

With a great many more, the ear seems to be doubly sealed up by unbelief. They will not believe that which God, Himself, has spoken. If they do not go the full length of renouncing belief in the Inspiration of Scripture, yet they might as well, for they do not read what the Scripture says! Or, if they do read, they read only to question and to cavil, to impose their own meaning upon the plain Words of God and so, in very truth, their ear is hermetically sealed with unbelief! Even HE—you know whom I mean—even He who was known to heal with a touch or a word, all who came to Him, could not do many mighty works in His own country because of the unbelief of the people—with such an evil power is unbelief girded! Oh, that God would save men from it! If they are to be saved, He must do it, for we cannot. When the ear is stopped up by unbelief, it matters not how wisely and how earnestly you proclaim the Truth of God—it will not affect the *heart* of the hearers.

So, Brothers and Sisters, I have shown you various ways in which the ear of man gets stopped up. It may also be stopped up by self-sufficiency. When a man has enough in himself to satisfy him, he wants nothing of Christ. When he fancies he can do everything himself, why does he need to cry to the strong for strength? Sometimes the ear gets stopped up with the love of sin. Our Lord Jesus said to the Jews who sought to slay Him, "How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?" And I may say to others, "How can you who love the drunk's cup believe in Christ? How can you believe in Christ, you who are unfaithful to your wives, or you young men who follow after evil and wantonness in these polluted streets of ours?" How is it to be expected that the pure Gospel should be in favor with men who are given to uncleanness?

These things stop up men's ears so they say to the preacher, "If we attended to this Gospel, we could not go on in our sins and we would be disturbed in our conscience—therefore we will hear you another day concerning this matter." When the days of their dalliance are over and they have drained the cup of the world's pleasure and lust. When their bones are full of rottenness and their sins are dragging them fast to Hell—then, perhaps, they will turn to their God—but not now! Their ears are sealed with the love of sin and with a hardness of heart which makes them impenitent for their iniquities. O Sirs, do you not see how difficult it is to get at man's heart when you cannot even get through the gate that leads to it? Ear-gate is blocked up with mud and all the King's captains will fail to break a way through it unless the Prince Immanuel, Himself, shall come with the irresistible battering ram of His almighty Grace and break down that gate by the sheer force of His Omnipotent love!

Then there is another difficulty. If we get through the ear and the man is influenced to listen, *his heart does not retain that which is good*—he soon forgets it. Hence the text says of the Lord, "He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction." Oh, what defeats we have had! I mean we who are teachers and preachers from the pulpit, or you who give your instruction in the Sunday school class. Ah, we think the child, the man,

the woman has learned that Truth of God at last, but it is as much as if we had written it on a blackboard—it is soon wiped out. "Oh, yes," we thought to ourselves, "we have put it so plainly, we have illustrated it so deftly, we have pressed it home so patiently and so earnestly that they can never forget it!" Alas, what we tried to write upon their minds is as if it were written upon water, or like the marks that a child makes upon the sand by the seashore which the next wave washes out!

How shall men be saved? *We* cannot impress them or, if we *do* impress them, how often it ends in nothing! See them stream into the Enquiry Room! Note their tears! Listen to the story of their repentance! Hear their confessions and declarations that they have found the Savior! Read the report in the papers—so many saved! But, within six months, where are they? Are they to be found in our churches? Are they working with the people of God? Some of them, for whom God be thanked, but, oh, how large a proportion have gone back, like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire! Would I not, therefore, have these special efforts to reach the unsaved? Of course I would—all the same, even, for what I have said. Whatever comes of it, our *duty* is one thing, the *result* of it is quite another! That which comes of it is often so disappointing that we are made to realize our own utter inability—and then we are made to rely alone upon God's all-sufficient ability! Unless *He* opens the ear, it is never opened! And unless *He* seals the instruction upon the heart, burning it into the conscience as with a hot iron, setting His own instruction manual upon the innermost core of the being—all that is done is soon undone and nothing is really done effectually!

Another difficulty must be noticed. That is, *the purpose of so many men.* Indeed, the secret purpose of *all* men—and from this purpose men have to be withdrawn. The purpose of most men is to seek after happiness. And their notion is that they will find it by having their own way. They have not found it yet—their own way has led them into much sorrow. They purposed to change, especially in one particular direction, but still to follow their own way in another fashion. They were, perhaps, too coarse—they will now be more polite. They were really outrageous in their sin—they will now be more decorous. They were, perhaps, going at too fast a pace—they will go a little slower, but in the same direction, *still seeking the pleasures of the world*, still desiring to please self. But to bow before God and confess their sin—they will have none of that! To turn from all their evil ways and to seek after perfect holiness—they will have none of that! To come to Christ and, in that coming, to be obedient to His supremacy and seek to follow His example, even as they hope to find pardon through His precious blood—they will not have that!

Their purpose is—well, perhaps, just at the last, when they cannot make any more out of the world, they will come in and cheat the devil in a mean and beggarly way—and try to sneak into Heaven by some back door if they can find one. After having given their *lives* to Satan, they will give their *deaths* to the Savior. That prayer of the meanest man mentioned in the whole Bible is one which I have often heard quoted with commendation. That wicked wretch of a Balaam, after hating God's people, doing them all the evil he could, and taking the reward for it, then

prays, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" What an abominable request! For the man who had lived such a life as that to ask that he might die the death of the righteous was atrocious and showed the awful blackness of his wicked heart! O Sirs, one day you will have to come to Christ and yield yourselves to His sway! If you do not bow before the scepter of His mercy, you will be broken in pieces by the rod of His wrath!

The difficulty is to bring men to this submission, now, before it is too late. They have their own purpose and their own hope, and their own scheme—how can we get them away from them? He that will not be healed, who can heal him? He that is resolved to be sick, who can make him whole? He that will die, who shall keep him alive? The man that will not eat, how can you feed him? He that will not drink, how can you slake his thirst? O Sirs, this makes the difficulty of getting at men, that they are bent on mischief, they have set their faces like a flint, as if determined to go down to Hell!

Yes, and there is one more thing which is, perhaps, the greatest barrier of all. It is not merely their deafness of ear, their stubbornness of spirit and their resoluteness of purpose, but it is *their pride of heart*. Oh, this is like granite! Where shall we find the diamond that can cut a thing so hard as man's pride? God can "hide pride from man," but *we* cannot! Man is so proud that he says that he has not sinned! Or, if he has sinned, he could not help it, poor creature that he is. Even if he has done wrong, he is no worse than his neighbors—and there are some beautiful traits of character about him—and these will furnish a sufficient covering for him! If he is told that he must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he greatly prefers to believe in himself! He will not come, as the publican did, and cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Why should he? He is not such a sinner as the publican was! He would be washed, but he does not feel that he is foul enough. He would be purified from sin, but then he is not quite certain that he has any sin from which he needs to be purified! And so, while the sick find the Good Physician and are healed, these who fancy themselves to be in health die in their sins!

We can overcome almost anything but man's pride. You know the old story of dear Mr. Hervey who said to the godly farmer, "Ah, John, it is wonderful when God overcomes sinful self!" "Yes, Mr. Hervey," answered the farmer, "but it is a greater wonder when He overcomes righteous self." And so it is. It is easy for the Lord to save a sinner, but it is impossible for a self-righteous man to be saved until he is brought down from his fatal pride. I have heard of a lady who used to say that she could not bear to hear a certain style of preaching. "Why," she said, "according to that teaching, I have no advantage over the girls in the street! And there is no better Heaven for a lady like me than there is for one of them!" So they shut themselves out with a sin which is as great as the sin which they condemn—for he that sets up his rags in preference to the robes of Christ—he that prefers his own righteousness to the precious blood of the Only-Begotten—has insulted his God with an arrogance so terrible that no sin can equal it in blackness! God save us from that sin! It needs God to do so, for only He can "hide pride from man."

II. Now, secondly, though man is hard to influence, GOD KNOWS HOW TO COME AT HIM and He does it in many ways.

According to the text, He sometimes does it, "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering on their beds." I have no doubt that many, many times, *men's sleeping thoughts have been the beginnings of better things for them*. You see, reason holds the helm of the vessel when we are awake and, as a consequence, it keeps conscience down in the hold and will not let him speak. But in our dreams, reason has left the helm and then, sometimes, conscience comes up and in his own wild way he begins to sound such an alarm that the man starts up in the night! His very hair stands on end with fear—a fear which might begin in a dream, but which was not, itself, a dream, for there was something real and substantial at the back of it. Did you ever notice how God awakened Nebuchadnezzar, that greatest man, perhaps, of his age? Why, in a dream! Then Nebuchadnezzar trembles and he sends for someone to interpret his dream. Many and many a man has dreamed of death, or dreamed of judgement—did you never have such a dream yourself? We do not attach any importance to dreams as prognostications or signs of our spiritual condition, but there can be no doubt that, frequently, conscience has been awake when the rest of the person has been asleep—and men have been startled in such a way that, when they did awake, they could not shake off the impression of their dreams.

God gets at other men in a different way, namely, *by affliction, or by the death of others*. What messengers of mercy afflictions have often been! The man has lost a dear baby on whom his heart's affection was set. Or, more often, still, some blessed little child who talked of Jesus and sang sweet hymns—and died with Heaven on its face—has been the means of getting at an ungodly father and an impenitent mother! No sermon reached them, but the little child-preacher touched them wondrously and, for months, perhaps for *years*, they could not shake off the impression. Some of you may remember other deaths. I will not harrow your feelings, but these death scenes have spoken loudly to you and you have not been able to forget them. God has opened your ear and I trust, also, that He has sealed His instruction upon your heart and that He has hidden pride from you and turned you from an evil purpose by means of personal afflictions or bereavements!

So have I known men awakened *by strange Providences*—by a fire, for instance, or by being in peril on board ship. Oh, how many have fallen on their knees when the vessel has begun to go down and before the lifeboat has been noticed! Bodily hunger, too, has brought some to hunger for Christ. And the result of their sin, when they have been in poverty, forlorn and lonely, and when nobody would associate with them because of their sin—perhaps even the plank bed and the hardiness of prison fare have brought them to seek their Savior and their God. God can get at men. Even the great leviathan, though no man can pierce him with a sword, has a weak place somewhere, where God can reach him. There is no sinner's heart so stout and stubborn but that, if God shall thrust at him, he shall soon find his heart melt like wax in the midst of his breast. The eternal God never yet came into contact with men, either in the way

of Divine Grace or vengeance, but He made them feel that He was not a man like themselves, with whom they could wrestle and contend, but that He was infinitely greater than the very strongest of them.

If God does not come at men by strange Providences, how often He does it *by singular words from the preacher!* Oh, sometimes we have to say things which we never intended to say. They come to us and we do not know where they are going—and some who are not in the secret, ask, "Why did the preacher say that?" Sirs, if he studied mere propriety and wished to please all his hearers, he would not have said it! But he has said it and God has blessed it. Awkwardly as it was put, it was put in the right shape, according to God's own way of looking at things—and sinners were saved and God was glorified!

Then God has a way of coming to men's hearts by *personal visitations*, without dream, without speech, without voice. I have often heard one say, "It was many years since I had been to a place of worship, but when I rose in the morning, I felt a singular softness of spirit coming over me and I said, 'I think I shall go, today, to hear such-and-such a man, and see if there will not be a word for me.'" Another has said, "I was at my work and I cannot tell how it was, but I felt that I must stop a bit and go aside and begin to pray." I remember one who is, I believe, at this moment a member of this Church. He said, "I leaned against some iron railings, for I could hardly hold myself up. I never remember having any conviction of sin before, but I was suddenly struck with a sense of sin, I know not how nor why." God can bring men to Himself, so let us never despair of *any*!

When you are praying for people, believe that there are other agencies than yours at the back of all that you can say, or I can say, and the books can say, and Bibles can say! There is the Holy Spirit and it is a part of our creed of which we ought often to think—"I believe in the Holy Spirit." Bring the sinner in prayer to the Holy Spirit and rest in this Truth of God, that God can come at him by some means or other. Perhaps He will reach him through you—can you not speak to him tonight? Try and get a word with some stranger here, in the Tabernacle. Speak an earnest, loving word about the Savior—and who knows?—the appointed time, the day of salvation for that soul may have come. God grant it!

III. My time has gone. I shall, therefore, ask you to listen to the outline of what I would have said upon the third point, and that is, WHEN GOD DOES GET AT MEN, HE ACCOMPLISHES GREAT PURPOSES.

His purpose is, first, *to withdraw man from his own purpose*. We have often admired the drawings of God—let us also admire the *withdrawings* of God—"That He may withdraw man from his purpose." Sometimes a man has purposed at a certain moment to commit a sin and God stops him from doing it. Perhaps if he had committed that one sin, the current of his life might have been turned so as never to be altered again. But God stopped him then and there. "Up to this point," He says, "you have gone, but you shall go no further. That is your last oath, your last bout of drunkenness, your last act of uncleanness. Stop!" It is the Lord who does this! He did it with some of us—He withdrew us from our purpose.

He also withdraws men from their general purpose of continuing in sin. They purpose to procrastinate, but God purposes that they shall postpone the acceptance of Grace no longer. They purpose that they will go a little further in sin, but God stops them then and there.

I find the translation may be that God withdraws man from his work, from that which has been his life-work—from the whole run and tenor of his conversation, God withdraws him! A man goes out after having received the Word of the Lord and he is a different man from that hour. I remember one who kept a low public house and who heard the Word of God. He had no sooner heard it than when he reached home he smashed up his signboard with the first axe he could find and shut up the house, resolving that he would have no more to do with the evil traffic! There is many a man who has been just as decided and earnest as that. God has stopped him and withdrawn him from his purpose. Oh, there are some whose lives have been spent in infamy and, in an instant, God has made them forsake it all—and they have loathed themselves! The change has been so sudden, as well as so radical, that all about them have gazed, admired and wondered at what the Grace of God has worked! When the Lord visits a man's heart, He withdraws him from his purpose.

I have it impressed upon me to believe that there is some soul here that is to be withdrawn from his purpose at once. I do not know what purpose you had upon your heart this afternoon, nor what your purpose is about where you are going to spend tonight, but I beseech you, if it was a purpose of sin, stop at once! Heed the word of warning—go no further. If you have resolved tomorrow, or at any time during the week, that you will commit this or that sin, O Love Divine, turn the man and he shall be turned! Deal with him this moment, O God, according to Your glorious Godhead, not according to the fickleness of his will, but according to Your Almighty Grace! Change the lion into a lamb, the raven to a dove! Thus the Lord withdraws man from his purpose.

Then what else does God do? *He hides pride from man.* That is a very strange expression, certainly, to, "hide pride from man." Did none of you ever hide away a knife from a child? Have you never hidden away fruit from your little children when they have had enough and they would have eaten more if they could find it? God often hides pride from men because if man can find anything to be proud of, he will be! Look at him, he is proud of his fine form! Look at that woman, how proud she is of her clothes, poor thing! One is proud of his ability, proud of his success, proud of his job, proud of his youth, proud of his old age, proud of what he never did, proud of what he did do but could not help doing! There is no one of us who has even a pennyworth of stuff to be proud of, whatever we may be! But unless God hides it all away, we go and find something and come strutting out just like our little children, when they say, "See my pretty coat?! See my new shoes?!"

Some of you mothers, in teaching your children to say that, bring them up to habits of pride. Well, they will only be like yourself—and that is the way with us all—we will be proud and he who has the least to be proud of is often prouder than all the rest! My Lord Mayor is not more proud of his badge and chain than many a crossing sweeper is of his

ragged trousers! Pride can live upon a dunghill as well as upon a throne! But God will hide pride from us, till, if we look about, we cannot find it and cannot see any reason for being proud. I pray God to hide from all of us, self-righteous pride, and self-seeking pride, and self-glorifying pride—to lay us low at the foot of the Cross. Whenever I find anybody saying, "I have attained to a perfectly sanctified life, I have no sinful propensities, I, I, I, I."—Ah, yes, if God had really dealt with you, He would have clipped your *I's* down! They will not be half so straight in the back, and so tall, when God takes you in hand!

He hides pride from men. Some of the Lord's workers have grown so big that the least thing offends them—everything must be according to their own way, or they will have nothing to do with it. Oh, it will not do, Brothers and Sisters! If God is with us, He will hide pride from man. There is nothing He dislikes more than pride! What does He say of it? "The proud He knows afar off." That is as much as to say that He will not touch them with a pair of tongs! He knows enough of them at a distance, He does not want them near Him! When He deals with us in the way of Grace, He hides pride from man.

Then, lastly, He thus *secures man's salvation from destruction*. "He keeps back his soul from the Pit and his life from perishing by the sword." How wonderfully has God kept some of us back from what would have been our destruction if we had gone on! Perhaps I speak to some here who have had many hairbreadth escapes—should not they live to God? I recollect with what solemn awe I spoke to an officer who rode in the famous charge at Balaclava. It must be 20 years ago or more, I think, since I was with him, and he was telling me of that terrible ride when the saddles were emptying on every side, and he rode on, and rode back unharmed. I could not but lay my hand upon him with great earnestness and say, "Are you not God's man since He spared you so? Will you not live to His Glory and give your heart to Him?"

And I would say that to all of you who have been often in fevers, or who have been near the gates of death. If you have been preserved, for what purpose was it? Surely, that you might yield yourselves to God, for He has interposed on purpose that your life should not go down to the Pit! I hope, also, that He has the higher design that you, yourselves, with your truest life, should never go down into that Pit from which there is no escape. Oh, that He would deliver every man, woman and child, here, from the wrath to come! For, believe me, there *is* a wrath to come, a fire that burns and shall never be quenched! Oh, for that visitation of God that shall hide pride from us, and reveal a Savior to us, that shall withdraw us from our own purpose, to fulfill in us the Divine purpose! Then shall we be saved from going down into the Pit. The Lord enable us to believe in His dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOB 33:6-33.

This is part of the speech of young Elihu, who had listened with much patience, but also with great indignation, to the harsh speeches of Job's three friends and to Job's self-righteous answers.

Verses 6, 7. *Behold, I am according to your wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make you afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon you.* Job had wished that he could argue his case with the Lord, Himself. If God would only withdraw the terror of His Presence from him, he would like to come even to His seat, and plead with Him. "Oh!" he said, "that there were one who would stand between me and God, that I might plead with Him!" "Here am I," answered Elihu, "I am the man you need. God has sent me. Now come and plead with me. There is no terror in me to make you afraid—neither have I a heavy hand to crush you."

8-10. *Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of your words, saying I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, He finds occasions against me, He counts me for His enemy.* Elihu puts the case very plainly. "There, Job, you have said that you are perfectly innocent and yet you are made to suffer. You have brought a charge against God, that He seeks occasion against you and treats you, who have always been His faithful friend, as though you were His enemy. You said"—

11, 12. *He puts my feet in the stocks, He marks all my paths. Behold, in this you are not just: I will answer you, that God is greater than man.* Here is the core of the whole matter. Whenever you and I begin to impugn the Justice of God, we ought to remember who we are and what He is! There is no comparison between us and the great God Over All, blessed forever! And for us to begin to charge Him with injustice, or unkindness is a desperately wicked action, of that we may be quite sure at the very outset.

13. *Why do you strive against Him? For He gives not account of any of His matters.* It is not for us to summon God to appear before us, as if He were our servant and we were His master, or to arraign Him before our judgment seat, and to sit there as if the Holy One of Israel were a felon who must answer for His crimes! It is high treason and blasphemy against the Most High for us to think of sitting in judgment upon Him! This was Paul's way of putting the matter when someone raised a question about the Divine Decree. Paul did not answer the objector, except by saying, "No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?" Let the moth contend with the flame, let the wax fight with the fire, let the stubble strive with the whirlwind, but as for us who are *less than nothing*, let us have no disputes with God! The fact is, God's dealings with us have an objective—He treats us, sometimes, with stern severity for our own good. We cannot always see the end from the beginning, but God has an end, and a gracious end, too, in all His dealings with His people.

14-22. *For God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering on their beds; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is also chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhors bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen and*

his bones that were not seen stick out. Yes, his soul draws near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. Yet in all this God is dealing with man in love and mercy! Man is a strange creature. He will not go in the right way by being drawn, so full often he must be driven. There is a whip for a horse, a bridle for an ass, a rod for a fool's back—and we are such fools that we must often feel that rod and, sometimes, to a very painful extent till our soul draws near unto the grave and our life to the destroyers.

23, 24. *If there is a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand to show unto man His uprightness then He is gracious to him, and says, Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.* Oh, what precious words! There is One with God, One of a thousand, the Chief among ten thousand, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus! When He comes in and makes man to see God's wondrous mingling of justice and mercy, then God turns in Infinite Grace upon the starving, dying sinner and says, "Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom."

25-28. *His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God, and He will be favorable unto him: and he shall see His face with joy: for He will render unto man His righteousness. He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it prompted me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light.* Some Thursday nights ago, there strayed into this place one who had long hated God and who had openly expressed his hatred of Him. He was much prayed for by friends, but he was desperate in his wickedness. He little dreamed, when he left his home, that he would come into this place. But so he did and here in this house God met with him and renewed his heart and made him to rejoice in the God he once despised! Here was a fulfillment of this text and I pray that it may be fulfilled again, tonight!

29-33. *Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the Pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold your peace and I will speak. If you have anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify you. If not, hearken unto me: hold your peace, and I shall teach you wisdom.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—126, 785, 63 (SONG III).

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

THE SECRET OF FAILURE
NO. 2454

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 1, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 25, 1886.

"Then the disciples came to Jesus privately, and said, Why could we not cast it out? So Jesus said to them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Move from here to there and it shall move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."
Matthew 17:19-21.

"And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could we not cast it out? So He said to them, This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."
Mark 9:28, 29.

I put these two texts together for this reason. Those of you who are acquainted with the Revised Version know that the 21st verse in the 17th chapter of Matthew is left out. There seems to be little doubt that it was inserted in certain copies by persons who thought that it ought to be there because it was in Mark's narrative. It is put in the margin of the Revised Version, but it is left out of the text. It is, therefore, very satisfactory to find that the omission from Matthew's account makes no real difference because we have the words in the 29th verse of the 9th of Mark, "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting." Only there is this fact to be noticed—in the Revised Version this verse runs, according to Mark, "This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer." Whether the fasting was originally there, or not, I cannot tell, but putting together the two accounts in Matthew and Mark, we believe we have a full and true report of what the Master did actually say on this occasion.

I. Observe then, dear Friends, at the outset, without any further preface, that WE MAY BE THE SERVANTS OF GOD AND YET WE MAY OCCASIONALLY BE DEFEATED. Those nine disciples who remained at the foot of the mountain when the Savior took the other three to behold His Transfiguration, had, each of them, a true commission from the Lord Jesus Christ. They were nine of His chosen Apostles. He had elected them in His own good pleasure and there was no doubt about their being really called to the Apostleship. They were not only elected, but they were also qualified, for on former occasions they had healed the sick, they had cast out devils and they had preached the Word of Christ with great power. Upon them rested miraculous influences and they were able to do great wonders in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—they were not only qualified to do this, but they had actually performed many marvels of healing.

When they went forth, girded with Divine power, they healed the sick and cast out devils everywhere, yet, on this occasion you perceive that they were completely baffled and beaten! A poor father had brought to them his epileptic son who was also possessed with an evil spirit—and they could neither cast out the evil spirit nor heal the epileptic boy. They came, as it were, to a great difficulty which quite nonplussed them. And the scoffing scribes were there, ready enough to take advantage of them and to say in scorn and contempt, "You cannot cure this child, for the power you have received from your Master is limited! He can do some strange things, but even *He* cannot do all things. Perhaps He has lost His former power and now, at last, a kind of devil has appeared that He cannot master. You see, you are mistaken in following Him—your faith has been fixed upon an impostor and you had better give it up."

Oh, how ready the evil spirit is to suggest dark thoughts if we cannot always be successful in our work of faith and labor of love! I believe that it was for this very reason that our Lord gave us this record of the defeat of the nine Apostles in order to let us feel that it is not so great a wonder if, sometimes, we have to come back and say, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" It is no new thing that we should be made a laughingstock to the enemies of the Cross of Christ because we cannot do what we have formerly done and are beaten in the very field where before we have achieved great and notable victories for our Master!

Brothers, why do you think that the Lord allows His servants to be beaten at all? Well, of course, the chief reason in *this* case was—and of that we will speak presently—because God gives the victory to *faith*—and if we will not believe, neither shall we be established. If we fall, as those disciples probably had fallen, into an unspiritual frame of mind and a low state of Grace, our commission will not be worth much, our former qualifications will be of little value and all successes we have had in earlier days will not take away the effect of present failures. We shall be like Samson who went out and shook himself as he had done before, but the Spirit of God had departed from him—and the Philistines soon overcame him—those very Philistines whom, if his Lord had still been with him, he would have smitten hip and thigh with great slaughter. If we are to do the Lord's work and to do it successfully, we must have faith in Him! We must look beyond ourselves, we must look beyond our commission, we must look beyond our personal qualifications, we must look beyond our former successes, we must look for a present anointing by the Holy Spirit and, *by faith*, we must hang upon the living God from day to day.

Apart from that, however—which we will dwell upon directly—I think our Lord intends that we should often have something fresh come across our path *to keep us from getting into ruts*. It is a very bad thing for anyone when even the Christian life gets to be merely mechanical. You know what state of things that is—you may have come here to this service just as a matter of course, almost without thinking what you were doing! I have known many persons, in the public worship of God, sing simply because the time for singing has come—and they frequently prove that they are singing only in a mechanical fashion, for they sit down before the hymn has come to an end—showing that they are not sufficiently inter-

ested to find out how it closes. So we may kneel, apparently in prayer, and not really be praying, for the mind is gadding to and fro. The minister, also, can get into a way of preaching that is almost like a parrot repeating by rote what it has been taught to say.

This will not do, Brothers and Sisters! The Lord will not have us always moving in ruts, so He does what men do, sometimes, in our roads when they put great blocks of timber to turn travelers off from one side of the road on to the other. In that way, this lunatic child was put right in the disciples' road so that they should not go on sleepily doing the same work without heart and without thought. This strange case wakes them up—they have something to deal with, now, that is very different from that they have had before! It is not a common fever, or even an ordinary case of Satanic possession, but it is a dreadful demoniac who is now before them, foaming, raging and wallowing in their presence—and altogether beyond their power to heal. This wakes them up and the Lord permits us, sometimes, to have trouble in the Church, or a shock in the family, that we may wake right up and not go on mechanically with little or no spiritual life in us.

Next, it was to make the disciples *see the infinite superiority of their Master*. Had he been there, there would have been no devil that would have nonplussed Him! Whatever needed to be accomplished, He spoke, and it was done. The soft utterance of His voice, the gentle uplifting of His hand, no—the very glance of His eye, or the willing in His mind was sufficient to work His marvelous cures! But the disciples had to come to Him and say, "We could not do it. We could not cast it out." No, and it is still the same—we cannot, but He can—therefore let us worship before the Omnipotent Christ, to whom nothing is difficult, much less impossible!

Then they were driven to *wish for more of His company*. They were made to see that they could not do without Him. Soldiers, without their ever-victorious Captain, driven before the enemy, they now felt that their strength must lie in Him and that they must stay close to Him and entreat Him not to leave them again.

This experience also *drove them to Him in prayer*. They now need their Master and they begin to cry to Him! "Why could we not cast it out?" was now their humiliating confession and enquiry! And there was, within the heart of their question, this earnest prayer, "O Master, help us to cast out devils again! Take not Your Spirit from us, but renew in us our former strength and give us even more." I am sure that anything that makes us often come back to our Lord must be a blessing to us. It is very humiliating to have so long preached in vain—to have gone to that village so many times and yet to see no conversions—to visit that lodging house so often and apparently to have made no impression upon the careless inhabitants, or to have gone into that dark prison and told the story of the Cross, only to find that the hearer is just as dark and, possibly, just as brutal as ever!

It seems as if our hearts must break when we are really in earnest, yet we cannot achieve the blessed purpose that we feel sure must be dear to the Savior's own heart! But it may be that our failure has much of Divine instruction in it and it may be the preface and preparation for future

success that shall greatly honor the Lord Jesus Christ! This was a part of the training of the twelve. They were now at college, with Christ as their Tutor. They were being prepared for those grand days when they should do even greater things than He had done, because He had gone back to His Father and had received still greater power—and had given it to them. "It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth." It is good for you, young Brothers in college, when you go to your first pastorate, to get battered about—to have all manner of troubles, to go through fire and through water! It will make men of you! You will be all the grander and the better servants of God in later years, when your own weakness shall have driven you back upon the Divine strength and you shall have learned to trust, not in man, much less in yourself, but to cast yourself confidently on God!

II. The next thing to be learned from this narrative is that when Christ's servants get baffled, they should make haste to their Master and ask Him this question, which His disciples put to Him, "Why could we not cast it out?" That is to be our second division. WHEN WE ARE BAFFLED, THERE MUST BE A CAUSE and it is well for us to try and find it. We must go to the Master and ask, "Why could we not cast it out?"

This enquiry, if it leads up to a correct answer, is evidently a very wise one, for *every man ought to try to know all he can about himself*. If I am successful, why is it that I succeed? Let me know the secret, that I may put the crown on the right head. If I do *not* succeed, let me know the reason why, that I may, at any rate, try to remove any impediment, if it is an impediment of my own making. If I am a vessel that is not fit for the Master's use, let me know why I am not fit, that I may, as much as lies in me, prepare myself for the great Master's service. I know that if I am fit to be used, He is sure to use me—but if He does not use me, it will most probably be because there is some unfitness in me. Try to know, Brothers and Sisters, why you get baffled in holy service, for it will be wise to know.

Probably, *it may tend very greatly to your humiliation*. It may make you go, with tears in your eyes, to the Mercy Seat. You may not yet know all that is in your own heart—there may be a something which to you seems to be a very trifling affair—which is grieving your God and weakening your spiritual power. It may seem to you to be a little thing, but in that little thing may lie the eggs of so much mischief that God will not tolerate it and He will not bless you until you are altogether clear of it! It will be wise and be right, therefore, even though it is to your sorrow and regret, that you should find the answer to the question, "Why could we not cast it out?"

For whatever may be the reason of your failure, *it may be cured*. In all probability it is not a great matter, certainly not an insuperable difficulty to the Lord. By the Grace of God this hindrance may be taken away from you and no longer be allowed to rob you of your power. Search it out, then! Look with both your eyes and search with the brightest light that you can borrow, that you may find out everything that restrains the Spirit of God and injures your own usefulness.

I would at the present time earnestly put into the mouths of a great many people this question, "Why could we not cast it out?" Let the

Church of God get to the windows of her sanctuaries, look out and say, "Why do not these thousands of people come to hear the Gospel that we preach?" There is all the harlotry in our streets—why has not the Church of God swept that away? The vilest sin is rampant—sin of which we dare not speak, it is so vile—how is it that we cannot cast this out? And all this social discord, this complaining and confusion, this aiming at the disruption of everything—what have we been doing that all this unrest has come? Why could we not cast these vile forces out?

Then, perhaps, in your family there is a son and you cannot bring him, even, to *respect* religion. It is not so very long ago since you nursed him on your knee—you did not *dream* then that he would live to be an opponent of the Christ in whom your soul delights! There are, in your family, certain evils that you pray against and yet they remain there. Father, you are responsible for your family and you cannot get rid of your responsibility. Mother, much responsibility for your children's characters must lie with you—if they are not what you would have them to be, oh, ask the question, "Why could we not cast the evils out of them?" That question each teacher may ask concerning his class—and each worker concerning his sphere of labor. I ask it concerning my hearers, when I remember some of them who have made a profession of religion and then have foully fallen. And others who have backslidden into coldness or lukewarmness and many who, after years of preaching, remain just the same as ever! What devil is this that has got into them? Why cannot we cast it out?

I will tell you another time when you may well ask this question. It is when you realize the evil that is within your own heart. There are certain sins there that have cost you much pain and they are not yet cast out. In your life, they have no rightful place—in your heart of heart, they have no welcome place, for you desire your heart to be clean before God. Still, those sins come. Perhaps, in your case, a hasty temper is the demon that takes possession of you. Or possibly you have a spirit tending to despondency. I do not know what your particular sins are, but do you not sometimes ask the question, "Why could we not cast them out?" We have got rid of some sins, "bag and baggage"—they never torment us now. It is long since we had a temptation to certain forms of sin—we sent them adrift in the name of the Lord. But there are certain others of these demons that hide away in dens and caves and corners—and we cannot rout them out. Why could we not cast them out? It is a question that may be asked from so many quarters and so many points—and it ought to be pressed home. I have put it to you, but let each one's own conscience get alone with Christ and ask Him, "Why am I baffled and defeated? Why cannot I cast this evil out?"

III. Now, in the third place, consider OUR LORD'S ANSWER, upon which I cannot dwell very long because our time is short.

The first answer that the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples was, "Because of your unbelief." He told them that their failure was due to *their lack of faith*. He did not say, "Because of the devil and his peculiar character, and the strength of his entrenchment within the poor sufferer's nature." No, He said, "Because of your unbelief." They might have said and it would have been true, "This demon has been long in possession." The

father said that the affliction came upon him when he was a child. You know that it is not easy to turn out a devil that has lived in any place, say, for 20 years. He says, "I have been in possession three, seven, 21 years and I am not leaving. Does not even the law of the land give me a right to remain after I have held undisputed possession so long? I am not leaving and, especially, I am not going for anything you say or do!" So, the long duration of a sin makes it all the more difficult matter to deal with it. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is a difficult thing to cast out evils of long standing. Still, if we have faith, there will be no difficulty in overcoming even those sins that have held possession of the sinner for a great length of time.

Moreover, in this case there was the strength of this devil as well as the length of his possession. He took this poor child and threw him into the fire or into the water, and hurled him to and fro at his cruel and wicked pleasure. He did this even before the disciples' eyes! Yes, but if they had had faith, they would have understood that though Satan is strong, Christ is far stronger! The devil is mighty, but God is Almighty! If the disciples had only believed, they might have overcome the demon by the power of Christ!

In addition to the length and the strength of this possession, there was a tremendous fury shown by this evil spirit. The child was not simply vexed as in ordinary cases of epilepsy, but he was tremendously tossed and torn. And I think there was, in this case, a feature of sullenness, also. It was apparently so, at any rate, for it was a dumb spirit. The child could not or did not speak—whatever happened to him, he was always silent. When people can speak of their troubles of soul, when they can tell you their grief of heart and ask your prayers, you can get on with them. But here was one who could not speak, yet there was the devil rending and tearing him. It was a horrible case, yet the failure did not lie in the child—it lay mainly, as the Savior put it—in the disciples' lack of faith—"Why could we not cast it out?" "Because of your unbelief."

You see, the lack of faith breaks the connection between us and Christ. We are like the telegraph wire which can convey the message as long as the electricity can travel along it—but if you break the connection, it is useless. Faith is our connection with Christ! Break the connection and then what can we do? It is by faith that God works in us and through us! But if unbelief comes in, we are unfit for Him to work with us. Would you have God to bless the man who will not believe in Him? Would you have God to set His seal to the works of the unbelieving? That cannot be! The first condition of success in any work for God must be hearty faith in the God for whom we are working. "Trust Me," He says, "and I will do anything for you." If we distrust Him, what can happen to us but what happened to the children of Israel whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

Now, you know that even the body of a child of God is precious in His sight, for there is faith in him, and he is precious in the sight of the Lord. But as for those who have no faith, Paul calls their bodies carcasses! "Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." If you have no faith in God why, what are you? Like brute beasts—"carcasses." But faith gives God some-

what of His due—it trusts Him and God says, "I will never let you trust Me beyond what I will do for you. If you trust Me, I will be as good as your faith." Would you have Him change a condition which is so natural, so proper, so beneficial for ourselves? O Brothers and Sisters, we shall do great things when God gives us more faith!

Looking now upon the condition of our times and upon the work allotted to each one of us, I feel that what we need is more faith. Never mind how firmly fixed are the mountains of iniquity—they will move if faith is strong. Never mind how deep have gone the root of the sycamore tree—it shall be plucked up by its roots if faith is strong. O Brothers and Sisters, we do not half believe! Drive the sword up to the hilt! Believe in God to the uttermost—dare and venture—and yet find no daring and no venturing in it as you simply trust your God as a child trusts his father! Many of us must feel, Brethren, that we have often failed because of our unbelief.

I must not dwell longer on that point because I want you to notice that the Savior added that, in some cases, *faith must rise to prayer* and must manifest itself mainly *by* prayer, or else it will do nothing. I am afraid that these disciples were so satisfied with their commission, their qualifications and with what they had already done, that they proceeded to work upon this epileptic child without prayer. The Savior says, "This kind—this sort of devil—this peculiarly furious kind of demon—will not go out by the exercise of ordinary faith. It must be faith that rises into prayer." You will frequently meet with persons to whom you desire to be blessed, but you never will be blessed to them till, first of all, you pray for them. And it may be that you will have to pray long and earnestly—and that the praying will have to rise to wrestling and the wrestling may have to be continued all night, as in the case of Jacob—and you may have to go to God as often as the importunate widow went to the unjust judge. It may be that there are cases in which God will not yield to your faith until your faith works in prayer and then, when prayer has worked to its utmost, you shall get the blessing!

I think that I can understand some of God's reasons for acting thus. First, He wants to make us see the greatness of the mercy, so He occupies our thoughts with the greatness of the distress that needs to be relieved and with this impossibility of that distress being relieved except by His own power and Godhead. That experience does us good, dear Friends, does it not? It makes us feel that the mercy, when it does come, will be remarkably precious to us.

The Lord also intends to excite our desires and that, likewise, does us good. To be all aglow with holy desires is, in itself, a healthy exercise. Then the Lord means to create in us unity of action. One Brother finds that he cannot get on alone, so he will call in another to help him in prayer—and much holy united supplication will be called forth by the very desperateness of the case which cannot be met by simple faith, or even by the prayer of one! Let us always seek the united prayers of many Brothers and Sisters. You remember that man who was carried by four and let down from the roof into Christ's Presence? Oh, I wish that in your houses, Brothers and Sisters, you met frequently, in twos and threes for united prayer! I should like to hear of little bands formed of Christian

men and women who pledged themselves to pray, four at a time, for somebody possessed by a devil of the kind that will not go out by ordinary means and must be ejected by four of you. Get together and say to yourselves, "We will not rest until this soul, and that soul, shall have the devil cast out and shall sit, clothed, and in their right mind, at Jesus Christ's feet." "This kind"—these certain kinds of devils are not to be driven out except by special, importunate, continued, united prayer! They can be cast out if you only believe and pray—there is never a devil but will have to go if you have faith enough and prayer enough to drive him out!

But then my text says, "*By prayer and fasting*." Our Lord Jesus Christ never made much of fasting. He very seldom spoke about it and when the Pharisees exaggerated it, He generally put them off by telling them that the time had not come for His disciples to fast because the Bridegroom was still with them—and while He was with them their days were to be days of joy. But, still, Holy Scripture does speak of fasting. In certain cases it advises fasting and there were godly men and godly women, such as Anna, the Prophetess, who "served God with fasting and prayer night and day." I do not mean to spiritualize this away. I believe, literally, that some of you would be a great deal the better if you did occasionally have a whole day of fasting and prayer. There is a lightness that comes over the frame, especially of bulky people like myself—we begin to feel ourselves quite light and ethereal. I remember one day of fasting and prayer in which I realized to myself, spiritually, the meaning of a Popish picture which I have sometimes seen, of a saint floating in the air! Well, that, of course, was impossible and I do not suppose that, when the picture was painted, it was believed in its *literal* sense. But there is a lightness, an elevation of the spirit above the flesh that will come over you after some hours of waiting upon God in fasting and prayer. I can advise Brothers and Sisters, sometimes, to try it—it will be good for their health and it certainly will not harm them. If we only ate about half what is ordinarily eaten, we would probably, all of us, be in better health! And if, occasionally, we put ourselves on short commons, not because there is any virtue in that, but in order to get our brains more clear, and to help our hearts to rest more fully upon the Savior, we would find that prayer and fasting have great power.

But I will take the fasting in another sense, for I believe that this, also, is what is meant by our Lord Jesus. Suppose that we have such cases as these to pray for—a Church full of discord, a nation or an individual full of sin! We might say to one another, "We will appoint such-and-such a time for prayer." Fast or not, according as your body would be the better or the worse for it. To some, it would be mischievous and injurious to fast, but say to yourselves, "We are going to take a whole day to ourselves. Two or three of us have agreed to devote an evening, or a whole night if it is a hard case, and we are going to meet together for no purpose but just to pray about that one matter. And if that does not do, we will meet again." I have often heard of instances in which persons who knew that they were thus made especially the object of some remarkable occasions of prayer, have been impressed by the fact, or, if not by the fact, yet the outcome of that special, particular, marked season of prayer

has been that, before long, they have been brought to Christ. There is a kind of devil that will not go out by ordinary prayer—there must be added to that pleading something by which our zeal shall be yet further increased—there must be "prayer and fasting."

I think, also, that I may spiritualize this expression, now, and say that when your mind gets into such a condition that you begin to sorrow over a lost soul. When you realize the meaning of that agonizing cry of Jeremiah, "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!"—it is *then* that the devil will have to go. When your soul is clothed in sackcloth and ashes and you go mourning without the light of the sun, saying, "I could die rather than that soul should die! I could wish myself accursed rather than that soul were accursed! I put myself in the dust before God, even in the dust of self-abasement on account of that soul, that I may win it to Christ," then that sort of devil will have to go out! Starving him out by starving yourself and making your own spirit wretched and miserable for the poor sinner's sake, you will make that devil find the person untenable any longer as a lodging place.

Permit me to say just one thing more. I believe that the devil of drunkenness will not go out of some men unless some of you Christian people, who pray for them, and talk with them, will practice fasting in the matter of total abstinence. I mean this—not that it is wrong for you to take what you do take, but that there are some souls that you cannot win unless you say to them, "For your sakes we are going to give up what might be lawful to us, that we may save you from the public house and all its temptations. Come, Jack, I intend to take the pledge. I never was drunk and probably never will be, but I will sign the pledge for your sake." There are some devils that will not go out till you act like that. And, Brothers, we ought to do *anything* that may result in the saving of a soul. We ought to deny ourselves *anything* of which we can deny ourselves if it is necessary to bring one single person to the Cross of Christ!

Let us see to it that we are quite clear in this matter, for there are still many devils that will not go out without prayer and fasting. Well then, say, "I will not fast to please the devil, or to please other people, but I will fast to *spite* the devil and to get him out of that man. I will fast from anything so that I may but bring him to the feet of Jesus that he may be saved." We who love the Lord are, I trust, all agreed on that matter, that no cost on our part should be spared to win a soul from the dominion of Satan and bring him into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

O you who are not saved, see how concerned we are about you! It seems nothing to you to lose your souls, but it seems everything to us—and it was everything to Christ! You would not suffer even a little self-denial that you might be saved, yet Christ *died*—so highly did He value the souls of sinners—rather than that you should perish! Oh, may that love of His make you begin to love yourselves so as to trust Him, and love Him, and find, in Him, eternal life! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:2-29.

Verses 2-4. *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John, and lead them up into an high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. And His clothes became shining, exceedingly white as snow; such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.* In the midst of all His sorrow and humiliation, our Lord let out some gleams of His Glory, to remind us who He was even while He was here in the depths of His grief. He was still none other than the all-glorious Lord of Heaven and earth, whose clothes, if He chose to make them so, would be whiter than snow, and brighter than the sun! Let us think of Him with great love and gratitude as we see what Glory He willingly laid aside for our sakes, and see how low He stooped who was, in Himself, immeasurably high.

5, 6. *And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were sorely afraid.* Peter had enough wit left to wish to stay where he was and, sometimes, when we are with our Lord in the mount, we can only say, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us stay where we are! Let our union and communion with Yourself continue forevermore!"

7, 8. *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, This My beloved Son. Hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves.* Moses is gone and Elijah is gone, but Jesus remains. And it is much the same with us, now, and we are quite content that all others should go that we may have "only Jesus." If He is with us, we have the best company in the world!

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man was risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* You see the great modesty and patience of our Lord. Though these three favored Apostles might see His Glory and afterwards bear witness concerning it, yet for the time being they must hold their tongues. All this Glory and only three men to see it, and these three must be quite silent! Our Lord seeks not honor from men—neither ought. His mind was even then occupied with thoughts of His great Sacrifice. When He spoke to Moses and Elijah, His theme was, "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." And when He spoke with these three eyewitnesses of His majesty, the subject of His converse was His own death and Resurrection. That was the object on which His heart's affection was set.

11-13. *And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And He answered and told them, Elijah verily comes first, and restores all things; and now it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nothing. But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatever they wished as it is written of him.* Notice that even when our Savior was answering His disciples' question about Elijah and John, the ruling passion being strong upon Him, He introduced into that answer something about His own death. That subject is always before His eyes—He never forgets it—

He is, in a sense, undergoing His passion even as He descends the Mount of Transfiguration.

14. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning them.* What a descent for Christ, from the peace and quiet of the Hill of Communion with the glorified, to the noise and tumult of a surging multitude and the mocking question of the jeering scribes!

15. *And straightaway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* I think there must be some truth in the common tradition that the face of our Lord Jesus still shone with the light of the Transfiguration. It does appear so to me from these words, "All the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed." Surely, it was not an amazement at the mere fact of seeing Him whom they had so often seen, but His face, I doubt not, glowed as the face of Moses did when he came down from the mount! Only observe that when the face of Moses burned with the reflected glory of God's Presence, the people could not bear to look upon him, but when the face of Christ shone with supernatural splendor, they, "were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him." There is an attractive glory about the Christ of God! Oh, for such a sight of His face at this moment that we should all run to Him and salute Him!

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* There had been a skirmish between the scribes and the disciples of Christ, and the scribes were winning the day. But when the Captain had come, the tide of battle was soon turned.

17, 18. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, which has a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he tears him: and he foams and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.* It was an aggravated case of epilepsy, attended with possession by an evil spirit. The disciples could not cast out this devil, and the scribes had, therefore, attacked their faith in the Master, Himself, while He was away.

19. *He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.* Unbelief is a great trouble to Christ. I never read that He said to the poor or to the sick, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" I never read that He expressed any weariness of human ignorance, or scarcely even of human sin, but when it is a matter of *unbelief*, then it stings Him and He cries, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring Him to Me."

20, 21. *And they brought him to Him: and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tore him and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, How long is it since this came unto him? And he said, Since he was a child.* And having begun with that sorrowful subject, the father, with the painful eloquence of pity, went on to tell the tale of woe—

22. *And ofttimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.* Here was unbelief, it is true, but there was with it a pitying entreaty that

meant more faith than it could express! Men do not usually beg where they expect nothing! And they do not make pitiful entreaties with tears unless they have some hope. Even though it was almost covered up, the Savior still fastened on that one utterance of unbelief—"if."

23. *Jesus said to him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.* "It is not, 'If *I* can,' but, 'If *you* can.'"

24. *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief!* There was faith, even though it was mixed with unbelief. It was a faith that made him pray, as I have already told you, and the Lord Jesus Christ found out where the faith was. He had, as it were, broken the great black lump of dead coal that looked to be nothing but unbelief and there was the living light of faith burning in the very center of it!

26. *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him and enter no more into him.* That is Christ's way of curing! Our Lord does not save sinners as some say that He does, just for a short time, and then let His work all grumble back to nothingness. This would be unworthy of Himself and unworthy of that gracious Spirit by whom He works! No, if He casts out a devil, he shall enter no more into the one he formerly tormented.

26. *And the spirit cried, and convulsed him greatly, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.* As old Thomas Fuller says, the devil knew that he had to go out, so, like a bad tenant, he did all the mischief he could before he left. Satan often acts in this fashion—just when Christ has come to cast him out, he drives the poor soul into deeper despair and, perhaps, into greater sin than he ever fell into in all his life.

27. *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.* He was not dead, though many thought he was, and said so. Christ does not cure and then kill—He cures so that we shall never die! No, no, poor Sinner, the last pangs of despair shall not destroy you! The fiercest, bitterest assaults of Satan shall not cause you to die! Christ will take you by the hand and you shall arise.

28-29. *And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could we not cast it out? So He said to them, This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.*

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

A CURE FOR A WEAK HEART
NO. 2455

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 8, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 4, 1886.

"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD."
Psalm 31:24.

THERE is no preaching like that which grows out of our own experience. You perceive, dear Friends, that David had trusted in the Lord. In very sore and singular trouble God had delivered him and, at the close of that deliverance, he wrote this Psalm, to be sung by the faithful of all times and every clime, and then he gave this exhortation which grew out of his own experience. O my Brothers, we shall never speak to the heart of our hearers unless what we say has been first engraved on our own hearts! The best notes of a sermon are those that are written on our own inner consciousness. If we speak of the things which we have tasted, and handled, and made our own, we speak with a certainty and with an authority which God is pleased to use for the comfort of His people. Think, then, that you can hear David, who has long since fallen asleep, speaking out of his royal tomb and saying, as the result of his own happy experience, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord."

I. In considering this text, I would first of all bid you notice AN APPROVED COMPANY to whom the Psalmist is speaking—"all you that hope in the Lord."

We must not regard all parts of the Bible as addressed alike to every individual. It has many messages to all the sons of Adam, but there are certain portions of it which are enclosed and belong only to that seed according to promise which is distinguished by faith, whereby it is known to be in Covenant with God. Holy Scripture discriminates—it makes some general promises, but its choicer words are given to persons of a special character. Judge for yourselves how far you come under the description of the text, "all you that hope in the Lord."

You perceive, first, *that they are men of hope*. They have not yet all they expect to have—they have not yet entered into possession of their full inheritance. They have a hope which is looking out for something better than before. They have a living hope which peers into the future beyond even the dark river of death, a hope with eyes so bright that it sees things invisible to others, and gazes upon glories which the unaided human eye has never beheld! Have you this good hope? Do all your measures lie about you or behind you? If so, the text speaks not to you—this arrow flies beyond you. If you are, indeed, a child of God, your hope

lies where as yet your eyes do not see, nor your hands grasp. God's people are a hoping people and, therefore, hoping for the fulfillment of the promises God has made to them.

Next, *they hope for good things.* This is implied when the Psalmist speaks of those that hope in the Lord, for no man hopes for evil things whose hope is in the Lord! We are not led, by hoping in the Lord, to hope even for temporal things beyond a certain limit. We hope not for riches! We hope not for a long continuance here, for we have heard a voice saying unto us, "This is not your rest, for it is polluted." Our hope could not, even if it would, content itself with the things which are seen and temporal—we are hoping for a city whose Builder and Maker is God! We are hoping for joys which eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man. We are hoping for things so good that they can only come from God, Himself! Our hope about them, therefore, is entirely in Him. Are you a man with this good hope? Are you a man with a hope that you would not exchange for ten thousand worlds? Perhaps, out of your box, like Pandora's, everything that seemed solid has gone—but at the bottom there lies a hope which does not fly away. This is the bird which sits and sings both day and night within your soul, even though you are shut up from going into the common haunts of men. You have a hope, a good hope, a hope of good things to come in the hereafter, in the islands of the blessed, where you shall be forever at home with your God!

If you are the persons spoken of in the text, *this hope of yours is rooted, grounded and established in the Lord*—"all you that hope in the Lord." You have not a hope apart from the ever-blessed Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To the Father you look with the expectation of a child who is an heir. To the Son of God you look, waiting for that wedding feast which shall be kept with Him to whom you are affianced by a betrothal that never can be contravened. To the Holy Spirit you look, for He is with you even now as the earnest of your inheritance, and you expect your inheritance to be of the same nature as the earnest which you already enjoy—and that you will be filled with His light, love, purity and blessedness. For this you are looking, "My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." Can you say that? We are men of great expectations, but our expectations are not in men that die, or men that live—our expectations are in Him who never dies, never fails and never disappoints those who put their trust in Him. Say, dear Hearer—I cannot come round and put the question to all of you individually—but say, Do you belong to this approved company of men that hope in the Lord?

I may further say that *some of them do not get much beyond hope*. I would not condemn them because of this—I must not judge those whom God has not condemned. I like to hear a child of God speak of the full assurance of faith, for full assurance is the proper tone of an educated faith. He that believes ought to be assured of the thing which he believes—otherwise, why does he believe it? And it is good when the milk of faith has stood so long that you can see the cream of full assurance floating upon the surface of it. Yet I know that if you do *not* have full assurance and if the most you say is, "I hope," you are included in the blessed

company to whom the Psalmist speaks—"all you that hope in the Lord." O Little-Faith, Miss Much-Afraid, Mr. Feeble-Mind and Mr. Fearing—all of you who belong to that very numerous family, all of you who are like Pharaoh's lean cattle—God loves you! These feeble ones are carried in the Savior's bosom, or gently led by His loving hand. Do not exclude yourself, I pray you, from any sweetness which lies in the text, "all you that hope in the Lord." Indeed, my text seems to me to have an arm like that of the Good Shepherd. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm," as if He would put His arm around them to draw them close up to His heart.

"All you that hope in the Lord"—you who are so little, you who are so useless, you who are so trembling, you who are not what you want to be, you who can see your own imperfections rather than anything else, you who groan rather than sing because you cannot as yet overcome your besetting sins—do you hope in the Lord? My text speaks to all that hope in the Lord and I should like so to preach from it that if I should omit any of you who are strong, I should, at any rate, apply the text to those who are very weak and trembling! "All you that hope in the Lord." This passage picks up the undermost. It seems to come like the men with the ambulance, to look after the wounded and carry them on at the same pace as those who march in the fullness of their strength!

This, then, is the approved company—"all you that hope in the Lord." Not, "you that hope in yourselves." Not, "you that hope in your priests." Not, "you that have any confidences anywhere else"—but you who hope in God alone!

II. Well now, secondly, my text seems to intimate that there is AN OCCASIONAL WEAKNESS—I might say, A FREQUENT WEAKNESS which is apparent in many of those that hope in the Lord.

It is a dangerous weakness, for it is *a weakness of the heart*. The text says, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your *heart*." Wherein it is implied that sometimes the heart of them that hope in the Lord grows weak. As you well know, heart disease is a very dangerous disease—even if a very little is wrong with the heart, it is a serious matter—for every other part of the body will be affected. Some of God's own people are occasionally and, many of them very often, subject to a weakness of the heart. They lose their courage, their joy departs from them and they become timorous and fearful.

This weakness *occurs on many occasions*. Sometimes we have seen those who hope in the Lord very weak in heart under great suffering. Pain follows pain—it seems as if every cut of the knife went deeper than the last and that the knife was sharper every time. Oh, let me tell you who are in vigorous health, have no bodily pain and do not always sympathize as you might with those who are the subjects of acute suffering—it is not as easy as you think to bear such pain as some of us have to endure! Let a man have an intolerable headache by the week, together, or it may be a sharp attack of rheumatism. Let sciatica come upon him or some of those terrible nerve pains that touch us to the very quick and you will see whether he who boasted of his strength finds that he has any strength to spare! At such times the spirits sink and the heart's action grows feebler and feebler.

So is it, also, in the battle of life. A man is struggling hard to gain a livelihood. Perhaps he has not any means of earning even bread for his wife and children. It is very trying for a man when the cupboard is bare and the children's clothes scarcely cover them from the cold. In such circumstances his heart sometimes fails him and then it is that God bids him be of good courage and strengthens his heart.

This weakness of heart is particularly felt in times of temptation. I have known Christian men who have had to work among ungodly companions and their spirits have been vexed every day with the filthy conversation of the wicked—and their taunts, and jeers, and blasphemies! And in such cases the heart has oftentimes grown very heavy, sick and faint. Those of us who love the old-fashioned Gospel cannot look abroad, today, and see so many pulpits turned against our God and many so-called "thinkers" deserting the old faith, without feeling that this is a burden which presses upon us very sorely. And our heart grows heavy and, perhaps, becomes weak.

I have also seen some Christians troubled with this complaint in the midst of great labor for the Lord. They are doing all they can do and yet they do not see the success they expected. They are not weary *of* the work, but they are weary *in* it. They see very clearly the imperfections in their service and they are further troubled because some who should help them, do not. They meet with cold hearts where they reckoned on enthusiasm! Instead of generosity, it may be that there is stinginess and, instead of prayerfulness burning like coals of juniper, there is lukewarmness or spiritual death. At such times the man of God puts his hand on his bosom and he says, "My heart, my heart fails me." Then the message of the text comes in, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord." Most men are subject to fainting fits at times. Even David became weak and faint. And Samson, after he had cried exultingly, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass, have I slain a thousand men," yet, for lack of a drink of water, was ready to lie down and faint and die! The best of men are but men at the best and, therefore, who wonders if their heart sometimes fails them in the day of suffering, in the hour of battle, or under the broiling sun when they are laboring for their Lord?

If this weakness of the heart should continue, it will be very injurious. At the present time, I believe that *it restricts enterprise*. That young man would go as a missionary to China, but his heart fails him. There is another who would be found in the Congo, seeking to preach Christ, but he has not the needed courage. There is a Sister who would be taking a Bible class, or visiting in the district where she lives, but she cannot summon the resolution to begin. Oh, how many good resolves and holy projects never come to anything! We see the bud and blossom, but they do not knit into fruit as they ought to! I hardly dare to think of the vast quantity of talent in the Redeemer's Kingdom that lies unused, often for lack of moral courage and confidence in God! I do not think that we are at all lacking in confidence in *ourselves*—at any rate, some of us are not—but it is confidence in *God* which is needed—and that is quite another thing. This confidence makes the feeble strong and the timid

brave—may we all have a large share of it! God deliver us from faintness of heart lest we injure the Kingdom of our Lord by withholding our service!

And, dear Friends, this weakness of heart *endangers the success of the best worker*. He who fights most valiantly may be on the verge of victory and yet be defeated if his heart should then fail him. I have no doubt, in reading the records of many campaigns, you, too, must have noticed that men have gone on from victory to victory and suddenly there has been a pause because their hearts failed them just when, had they followed up their previous successes, they would have swept all before them! Beware, you who have served God with courage, lest fear should take hold upon you and you should flinch in the day of battle and miss that which you might have won for your Lord!

This feeble heart *pleads many excuses*. I do not marvel that it does—how can I, when I know myself? O Brothers, Sisters, if you look within, well may your hearts fail you! And if you look without, upon the temptations that waylay you, upon the powers of darkness so strongly entrenched within their fortresses, well may you faint! What a task we undertake in trying to win a single soul, much more in seeking to win a city or the world for Christ! Well may our hearts fail if we begin to look away from God. The fable is told of Hercules, that he fought with a famous giant whom he could not, for a while, overcome because he was born of the earth and every time he was hurled to his mother, earth, he rose renewed in strength. Hercules tugged and strove with his gigantic foe and felt that the struggle was hopeless, till he discovered his adversary's secret—then he took him in his arms and hugged the monster to death!

You and I are invincible though a thousand stronger than Hercules should be against us—as long as we can fall back on our God! And the only hope of the enemy's victory is if he can keep us away from God. But even if he should throw us down and seem to break us in pieces, yet in that fall we fall upon our God and rest on Him, alone. We may lie prone upon the earth and cry, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." Come into contact with your God, fall upon Divine power and you will rise with new force and new strength! But, if you should once be separated from Him, then it would be all over with you. Yet, blessed be His name, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

III. Now, thirdly, I call your most earnest heed to the trumpet voice of the exhortation in the text, A SEASONABLE EXHORTATION—"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart."

I like the way this is put. It is not alone, "Be of good courage." There is an, "*and*" with it—"*and* He shall strengthen your heart." At the same time, the exhortation is not omitted. It does not say, "He shall comfort your heart, therefore you need do nothing." They err from the Scriptures who make the Grace of God a reason for doing nothing—it is the reason for doing everything! They who say that predestination and the working of a living God put man out of the field, make a gross mistake—it is these facts that bring man into the field. The most stern predestination is not the least in conflict with the most perfect freedom of the human will. I

may not be able to explain how it is so to you, but I know that it is so as a matter of fact—and that God requires us to be of good courage at the same moment that He says that He will strengthen our heart.

Dear Friends, if you want to get out of diffidence, timidity and despondency, you must *wake yourselves up*. This is incumbent upon you, for the text puts it so—"Be of good courage." Do not sit still, rub your eyes and say, "I cannot help it, I must always be dull like this." You must not be so! In the name of God, you are commanded in the text to "be of good courage." If you are indolent like that, you must not expect the Grace of God to operate upon you as though you were a block of wood and could be made into something against your will. Oh, no! You must determine to be of good courage. Therefore, arise, and shake yourself from the dust. Believe, dear Friend! Put your trust in God. "Give to the winds your fears." Take down your harp from the willows. "I cannot play it," you say. Get it down, all the same—even if you cannot play it, lay your fingers upon the strings—it is wonderful how, when once those accustomed fingers touch the well-beloved strings, it seems as if they were charmed into music. Do what you can and God will do for you what you can by no means do for yourself!

I know that a great many who are very sad and low in spirit come in here on a Thursday night—and their friends say to them, "We wish that we could cheer you up." I do not say *that*, but I do say *this*, "Be of good courage. Be of good courage!" It is the Lord's *command* to you. Do you not think that *your God deserves to be trusted?* What has He ever done that you should doubt Him? Does He not deserve your most confident faith? And what do you expect to get out of your timidity? He that is afraid of the weather—can he change it? He says that there will be a long frost—can he shorten it a single day by fretting over it? There is great depression in business and he will be ruined—will he be less likely to be ruined by worrying? Don't you see, then, that your God deserves your trust and that common wisdom bids you be of good courage?

If you are not of good courage, *what will happen to you?* I will not say that you will be a coward, but I will say that you will look very much like one. I have heard of one who said that he was of a very retiring disposition—he could not take a Sunday school class, or speak a word to anybody for the Master, he was so retiring! I have also heard of a soldier who, in the day of battle, was so very retiring that they shot him as a deserter! I would not have you deserve the coward's doom and speak of it as, "retiring." No, get not into that class—be you rather like that soldier of Alexander who was always to the front—and the reason was that he bore about with him what was thought to be an incurable disease and he suffered so much pain that he did not care whether he lived or died! Alexander took great pains to have him healed and when he was quite well, he never exposed his precious life to any risk, again! Oh, I would rather that you should be stung into courage by excessive pain than that you should be healed into cowardice! Christ ought not to be served by feather-bed soldiers! He deserves that we trust Him and bring ourselves into His service with a courage that cannot be daunted. Though it is upon the pikes of His adversaries, let us find Paradise there, for we shall

find it if we follow Christ faithfully to the death! God grant us, then, to be of good courage!

Why are you afraid? Is God with you and yet are you afraid? What ails you? Has God forsaken you? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Has Omnipotence grown weak? Has He been a wilderness to you? Has the manna ceased to fall, or the waters to flow? Go, yield yourself up to Him! Ask Him, by His Grace, to make you heroic instead of being numbered among the fearful and the unbelieving who turn their backs in the day of battle and seek their own selfish ease and comfort.

IV. I finish up with A CHEERING PROMISE—"He shall strengthen your heart."

God, alone, can strengthen the heart. I suppose that physicians can do something for weak hearts, though I do not know. As a general rule, when a man dies suddenly and they do not know what it is that killed him, they say, "It is disease of the heart." The heart is a mysterious portion of our being and needs great care. Spiritually, the mercy is that God, who made the heart, understands the heart and He who sees its weakness, knows how to strengthen it!

How does God strengthen men's hearts? Well, sometimes, *by gracious Providences*. Something very unexpected happens. I have, myself, learned to *expect* the unexpected. I have known what it is to almost wish on purpose to get into a situation in which there was no way of escape, that I might see the Lord cleave the hills asunder, or divide even the sea to make a way for His people! It is a grand thing to get into such deep water that you cannot touch the bottom and must swim—and then to feel the eternal buoyancy of God's Providence bearing you up! It is grand swimming when there are ten thousand fathoms of ocean below you—there is no fear of knocking your foot against a rock, then, and when you get right out into a simple dependence upon the living God and feel the waves of His eternal influences round about you—then will you be happy and blessed!

The Lord also has a way of strengthening men's hearts *by the kindly fellowship of friends*. Paul was often much refreshed by Christian associates. The Lord can send someone who, "as iron sharpens iron," may sharpen you and make you ready for service. "A word fitly spoken"—"a word upon wheels," as the Hebrew has it—how good it is when it comes in just at the right time! It "is like apples of gold in baskets of silver." Such are goodly words brought to us by men of faith and experience whom God sends to us.

So, too, have I known a man's heart to be mightily strengthened *by a precious promise*. Who knows the wonderful power of a text of Scripture? We used to have, 30 years ago—I do not know whether you have them now—"poor men's plasters" which we used when we felt weak in the back—but a promise out of the Scripture is a poor man's plaster, indeed! What strength it gives to the loins! How we seem to be braced up when we truly lay hold of a promise of God and it really gets a grip upon our spirit!

Beside all that, *God the Holy Spirit has a secret way of strengthening the courage of God's people which none of us can explain*. Have you ever

felt it? You may have gone to your bed, sick at heart, "weary, and worn, and sad," and you wake in the morning ready for anything! Perhaps in the middle of the night you awake and the visitations of God are manifested to you—and you feel as happy as if everything went the way you would like it to go. No, you shall be more happy that everything should cross you than that everything should please you if it is God's sweet will! You feel a sudden strengthening of your spirit, so that you are perfectly resigned, satisfied, prepared and ready. I have known a man of God in a tight spot. Everything has seemed to be going wrong and he has got worried and troubled till he has stepped aside and retired for a little prayer to his God. He has not been absent five minutes yet he has come back feeling, "Now I am ready for you." All the flurry has gone, all the worry has gone—God has revived his spirit and strengthened his heart!

I have seen a good woman when her husband has just died and all her hope has seemed withered. The first burst of grief has passed and she has bowed by the side of that bed, lifted up her heart to God and then has brushed her tears away and given herself up to fight the battle of life for her children—and God has strengthened her heart as in a moment! Oh, do not give up! You need not be cowards! Do not give up. Do not say, "I am beaten. I will always be despondent. My life is crushed." You need not be so! "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart." Get to your chambers, fall upon your knees, pour out your heart before God! Tell your trouble to the Most High and, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, He must and will help those who put their trust in Him! Has he ever failed any who trusted in Him? Who has ever stopped His hand, or withdrawn Him from His designs? Who has ever made Him deny His promise, or retract His word? If you will trust Him, He will be better to you than your fears! No, better to you than your *beliefs*, or your largest hopes! Stay yourselves upon Him! Lean upon the bosom of eternal Love! Lean hard, lean all your weight there and leave that weight there, and the Lord be with you and bless you! Blessed are all they that trust in the Lord.

How I wish that all here had trusted in the Lord, or that they would seek Him, even now, if they have never yet found Him! The Lord be gracious to each of you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 31.

Verse 1. *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust.* Can we say as much as that? However else this Psalm of David may end, it strikes a grand keynote, that which should be the first indication of our spiritual life—confidence in God. Here is an ancient weather-beaten saint who, in the very midst of the storm, can say, "In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust." There will the anchor of his soul find a sure hold!

1. *Let me never be ashamed.* "How can You let me be put to shame after having trusted in You, O my God? I shall be ashamed if You forsake me, if Your promises are not kept to me, O my Lord! Therefore, 'let me never be ashamed.'"

1. *Deliver me in Your righteousness.* David dares to appeal even to the faithfulness, truth and justice of Jehovah, that He should keep the promise upon which His servant had placed his trust.

2. *Bow down Your ear to me.* "I am very weak, I am also very unworthy—it will be a great instance of Your Divine condescension if You hear me—yet I cry unto You, 'Bow down Your ear to me.'"

2. *Deliver me speedily.* We may not set the time for God to answer our petitions, yet may we expect that His sure mercies will be swift mercies when our necessities are very urgent. So the Psalmist pleads, "Lord, come not late to me, lest You come too late to me, for I am in sore distress! My case is urgent, therefore help me now, 'deliver me speedily.'"

2. *Be You my strong rock, an house of defense to save me.* He remembered Adullam and Engedi and he worked these places into his supplication. A man's prayer should be the index of his life's history. The scenes to which he has been most accustomed should rise up vividly before his spirit when he is at the Throne of Grace. It was so with David—"My God, be You an immutable, immovable, impregnable rock to me and let me dwell in You. Be not merely a refuge for the moment, but be 'a house of defense to save me.'"

3. *For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name's sake lead me, and guide me.* David is of a logical turn of mind. Notice the, "therefore," in this verse. What an amazing, "for," there is here! "Be You my strong rock," "*for* You *are* my rock." What God is already, we may ask Him to be! What we believe Him to be by faith, we may ask Him to be in our experience. Observe that David's appeal is not in any degree to his own merit, but. "for Your name's sake"—"because I trust in Your name, and if You do not do as You have said, Your great name will suffer dishonor. How can I believe in Your veracity if You do not do for me according to Your promise and Covenant? 'Therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me.' 'Guide me,' too, even when I do not think of Your Presence. Lead me like a child and guide me like a traveler." There are shades of meaning, here, so that there is no redundancy of expression in the words, "Lead me, and guide me." But even if the two words meant the same, it would be quite lawful for the Psalmist to repeat the prayer, since he felt his need of leading and guiding to be so great. "Lord, I am so foolish, and the way is so difficult, 'therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me, and guide me.'"

4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for You are my strength.* "Lord, my enemies have entangled me! Before I was aware of it, I was taken in the meshes of their net—will You not pull me out, O Lord? It will need a strong pull, but then, 'You are my strength.' 'Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for You are my strength.'" Sometimes our strength is crippled and we are baffled by the net in which we are enclosed. We feel ourselves hampered. We cannot use the strength we have, but God's strength is always available. There seems to me to be a very blessed turn in the expression here used—"Pull me out of the net: for You are my strength."

5. *Into Your hands I commit my spirit.* You notice that this Psalm [31] is dedicated to the chief musician. I have studied these Psalms, not only by

the hour, and by the day, but sometimes by the month, together. Some of these Psalms have been the pillow for my head at night. Others of them, like wafers made of honey, have lain in my mouth till I have sucked out of them their Divine sweetness. I have often noticed that when one of these sacred songs is dedicated to the chief musician, The Chief Musician generally appears somewhere in the Psalm—He from whom comes all the music that ever makes bleeding hearts, glad, usually shows some traces of Himself within the Psalm itself! In this instance, the living words of David were the dying words of David's Lord—"Into Your hands I commend My spirit." What David did and what the Lord Jesus Christ did, let us do, and do it every day—let us commit our spirit into the hands of our God.

5, 6. *You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth, I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.* Men are sure to have some kind of trust or other on which they rely. In David's day some trusted to false gods, others relied upon their own strength. The Psalmist does not speak in soft tones concerning these people, but he says, "I could not bear them. 'I have hated them that regard lying vanities.' I would not come into their secret, or have any connection with them. I was astonished at them, that they should turn away from God! But as for myself, 'I trust in Jehovah.'" Look how he comes back to the note with which he started—"In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust"—and now he repeats it, "I trust in Jehovah." It is an unfashionable thing—many will not do it—yet David says, "I trust in Jehovah," as if he dared to stand alone and did not mind how singular he seemed to be.

7. *I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy.* What a grand faith! Should there not, sometimes, be the sounding of the cymbals even in the midst of our supplications? Though we must often put on sackcloth, yet we must lift up our song of praise whenever we can—"'I will be glad and rejoice'—there shall be a reduplication of my delight—'I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy.'"

7. *For You have considered my trouble.* "You did not send it without due consideration. You weighed it and now You look upon me and You study my trouble, You know all about it." You know what is meant by human consideration, but how wonderful must Divine consideration be! When a single glance suffices for Jehovah to know all that is transpiring in the whole universe, what must His consideration be! "You have considered my trouble."

7. *You have known my soul in adversities.* "When others did not know me, You did. You were familiar with me and sympathetic towards me, especially in the day of adversity. 'You have known my soul.'" God knows His own children even when they are in rags and when their faces are stained with tears, and their spirits are depressed almost to despair—"You have known my soul in adversities."

8. *And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy.* "No. I may get into the enemy's prison, but there is no bar to it. 'You have not shut me up.' I may seem to get into my enemy's hand, but he cannot shut that hand." Truly, it must be so because David had already put his soul into

the hands of God—"Into Your hands I commit my spirit." How, then, could he be shut up in the hands of the enemy?

8. *You have set my feet in a large room—*

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."

Wherever the child of God is when his faith is in active exercise, his feet are in a large room—by faith he walks at liberty!

9. *Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble.* In this short sentence of four words—"I am in trouble"—David gives the text of which the next few verses are a kind of sermon with divisions and subdivisions.

9. *My eyes are consumed with grief.* "My eyes seem burnt up with scalding tears." The salt of our tears wears out the very strength of our life. "My eyes are consumed with grief."—

9. *Yes, my soul and my belly.* Or, "body." The inward part of my being seems washed away with the deluge of my tears."

10. *For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.* Better spend them in sighing than in sinning! Yet it is a sad case when we seem to measure our days by the bars of our grief.

10. *My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed.* Now he sees to the bottom of his sorrow—"My strength fails because of my iniquity." We can bear those sorrows which have no connection with our sins, but, alas, where are *they* to be found? It may be that David's great sin seemed to him to lie at the very root of all his grief.

11. *I was a reproach among all my enemies.* They had found something to fling at him and they were delighted to throw it with all their malicious force! "I was a reproach among all my enemies"—

11. *But especially among my neighbors.* Those that are nearest can stab the sharpest. Those who knew David the best endeavored to find some silly tale to use against him.

11. *And a fear to my acquaintance: they that did see me outside, fled from me.* This Psalm may have been written after Absalom's rebellion, when Shimei cursed the king, and when everybody seemed to be forsaking him. Then was David brought into a low estate, indeed.

12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.* This was the same David who slew the Philistine giant! This was the great deliverer of his country, yet the people had forgotten all that. Earthly popularity is the most fleeting thing under Heaven. The world is a hard and cruel master—it forgets its servants when they grow old—it has nothing good to say of them when there is nothing further to be got out of them. So David laments, "I am like a broken vessel"—a potsherd that can hold nothing and is flung away upon a dunghill.

13. *For I have heard the slander of many.* To have one slanderer attacking your character is bad enough, but to have many such cruel enemies about you—to have a whole brood of Hell's hornets, as it were, stinging you—oh, what misery is this! You who, happily, have never experienced this torture, cannot imagine what agony it causes. I hope you may never know it.

13, 14. *Fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O*

LORD. Here he is back on the old Rock, and rejoicing as his feet stand once more on this firm foundation—"I trusted in you, O Jehovah."

14, 16. *I said, You are my God. My times are in Your hand.* "My enemies cannot do anything against me without Your permission." Divine Providence is a downy pillow for an aching head, a blessed salve for the sharpest pain. He who can feel that his times are in the hand of God need not tremble at anything that is in the hand of man!

15, 16. *Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant: save me for Your mercies' sake.* "If Your face shines upon me, Lord, they may look as black as they please. If You will but deliver me, I care not how cruelly they persecute me. If You will save me, who can destroy me?" O you who are in trouble at this time, hasten to your God! Where should the little bird fly when pursued by the hawk, but to its shelter in the rock? Where can you go, O sheep of Christ's flock, but to your Shepherd?

17. *Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.* There is something of the harshness of the old dispensation about that prayer, so we will turn it into a prophecy and say, "The wicked *shall be ashamed*—they *shall be* silent in the grave."

18, 19. *Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh how great is Your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You.* Is not that a blessed expression to be used by the man who said that his life was spent with grief and his years with sighing?

19. *Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men!* Not only has the Lord abundant goodness stored up for His children, but His goodness is brought out for others to see and for His people to feed upon even in the presence of their enemies!

20. *You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* They shall not be wounded by all the malice of their adversaries—they shall be preserved in the King's royal pavilion.

21-23. *Blessed be the LORD for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You. O love the LORD, all you His saints.* See what a fountain of happiness there is in the Psalmist's heart? He longs for all the saints to love the Lord!

23, 24. *For the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.* In this Psalm we have heard the wail of the sackbut and the clashing of the cymbals—but we finish with the blast of the silver trumpets!

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

THE LAMB OUR LEADER
NO. 2456

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 15, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 7, 1886.

"These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes."
Revelation 14:4.

YOU, dear Friends who belong to the Tabernacle, are well acquainted with our venerable friend, George Rogers. It was a great joy to me to find him alive when I came home from the Continent. He said that he must keep on living till he had seen me once more, and then he hoped that he should go Home. That was a month ago, but yesterday I saw him again and he seemed to be greatly revived and refreshed. He has attained an extremely advanced age and it is only natural that he should soon go to his rest and reward. He remarked to me, yesterday, that he had bid farewell to the world, entirely, and he did not wish to renew the acquaintance! He did not know why he should linger here any longer, for everything was finished and he was ready to depart. And then he said to me, in his cheery way, "I wonder whether I shall see that new Baptist Chapel completed." You know that he is not a Baptist, but a Congregationalist, yet he has been with us so many years that we always claim him!

He added, "When it is built, I hope they will send a regular old-fashioned Baptist to preach in it." I asked him, "What sort of old-fashioned Baptist do you mean?" "Why," he replied, "the oldest-fashioned Baptist was the man that cried, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.' That is the old-fashioned sort of Baptist I mean—John the Baptist—and that is the sort I hope will come there." "Yes," I said, "and I wish that was the sort of preacher who would go *everywhere*, for that is the Truth of God which still needs to be preached." "Ah, yes," said Mr. Rogers, "there is nothing like the doctrine of the Atoning Sacrifice! It is the doctrine for this world and it is the doctrine for the next." "Do you not think," he said, "that this passage would make you a good text for tomorrow, 'These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes'?" "Yes," I answered, "that will make me a good text. May God send me the sermon!"

That is why I have taken this text—it really comes to you from that venerable man who is so far advanced in years and so close to the border of the eternal state. He feels that the old-fashioned Baptist doctrine that ought to be continually preached is this, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and that the best character that can be ascribed to Christians in any age is this, "These are they which follow the

Lamb wherever He goes." Upon that theme I am now going to speak to you as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. And, first, I would make this observation, that THIS IS CHARACTERISTIC OF SAINTS—"These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." This has always been the way of the saints. This is the way the holy Prophets went, the way of the martyrs, the way of the reformers and confessors, the way of all who shall meet above around the Throne of God and of the Lamb.

Begin at the beginning. When do you see Abel at his best? It is when he brings of the firstlings of his flock and stands beside the altar of sacrifice whereon lies the God-accepted lamb! The first of the martyrs is a martyr to the doctrine of Sacrifice by Blood! He, being dead, yet speaks, bearing his testimony that there is no way of access to God except by the sacrifice of a lamb.

Pass on to Abraham. What is one of the most memorable sayings of the father of the faithful? "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Did not Abraham, then, by faith, see Christ's day? Yes, he saw it afar off and was glad. He knew that the great Jehovah-Jireh would provide a wondrous Substitute who would die in the place of His people, even as the ram took the place of Isaac. And Abraham saw in his own offering of his son whom he so dearly loved, a faint image of that greater Offering of the Eternal Father when He would give His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die that His people might live.

Again I say that it is always characteristic of God's people that they follow the Lamb, for look at Israel in Egypt. They are slaves at the brick kilns. They are building treasure cities and pyramids, but they cannot stir out of Egypt until, first of all, they have slain and eaten the paschal lamb and sprinkled his blood upon their dwelling places. Then they go out singing the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb! All through their marching in the wilderness there was the offering of the morning lamb and the evening lamb. The people of God were known by their trust in a great Sacrifice, that Sacrifice being prefigured by "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer," and especially by the Passover lamb and the morning and the evening lamb.

I do not know any clearer characteristic of the saints throughout the ages that are past than this, "These are they which follow the Lamb." Think of the Prophet Isaiah and as you remember him and his prophecy, does not the thought of the Lamb of God rise up to your mind at once? "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth."

Then, when the new saints come into the world in the brighter day—the clearer dispensation of the Gospel—does not John the Baptist point all who hear him to the Lamb of God? That morning star of the Christian solar system throws its bright beams upon Jesus, the one great Sacrifice! John cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and that other John, who heard Him speak, started following the Lamb and all through his life he kept close company with that blessed

Lamb of God till, in his extreme old age, on the island of Patmos, he saw visions of God and wrote that wonderful Book of the Revelation out of which we were reading just now. And one of the noteworthy points in that Book is that John continually speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb. The one Sacrifice has been offered, the redemption price has been fully paid, the sins of the redeemed have been all put away and now one might have thought that the Lord Jesus would assume some other form—for instance, that of the Lion of the tribe of Judah would always be predominant in the apocalyptic vision—yet it is not so! John says, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion."

Sacrifice is always first—first before the angels, first before the elders who represent the Church, first in the very center of the Throne of God, Himself—for it is the Throne of God and of Him who offered Himself as the Sacrifice, that is, the Lamb! This, then, is the emblem on the escutcheon of the Church triumphant as well as the Church militant, "a Lamb as it had been slain." For the wilderness and for Canaan, for the battlefield and for the palace, for the Cross and for the Throne, it is always the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain and that lives again, and lives to die no more. God forbid that this matchless figure should ever be dim to our eyes, but may we gaze upon it with ever-increasing delight!

Saints in all ages have followed the Lamb and I do not wonder that they have done so, for *it was the Lamb that made them saints*. They have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Sainthood begins at Calvary! There is no possibility of being holy till first there has been remission of sin—and there is no remission of sin without the shedding of the blood of the Lamb! No, dear Friends, we have no hope of being clean in God's eyes unless we have been washed. And there is no fountain of cleansing for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but that which was opened when Christ hung on the Cross! Well may they follow Christ who have been made saints by Him.

They follow the Lamb, again, because *it is He who keeps them saints*. "He keeps the feet of His saints." If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and so have fellowship, one with another, it is still, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son," which, "cleanses us from all sin." We need perpetual cleansing and we get that perpetual cleansing in the ever-flowing stream from the wounds of Christ which, in effect, perpetually bleed for those who put their trust in Him. Well may the saints follow the Lamb, for to Him they owe not only the beginning, but the continuance of their spiritual life and saintship!

And, Brothers and Sisters, *what other leader could they follow?* What model, except Christ, is there for a saint to copy? How can we attain to holiness if we work not after this pattern? Where shall any manhood be seen as fit for imitation except where it is linked with the Godhead in the Divine Son of God? Where shall we see the Law of God written out in living characters but in the life of this glorious Man, this blessed Son of God? Beloved, it is not possible for saints, in all respects, to follow any other leader, and it is characteristic of them that they follow the Lamb!

Ask yourselves, my dear Hearers, whether you are among these followers of the Lamb.

II. The second part of our subject shows us that THIS EXPRESSION IS INSTRUCTIVE TO THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE SAINTS. Those of us who have already the commencement of sanctification should remember that we can only be saints in the fullest sense by following the Lamb wherever He goes.

First, then, *we are to follow the Lamb*. Some men spurn the idea of following anybody—they have very capacious brains and they like to think and to excogitate. They will have nothing but what is beaten out on their own anvils. To accept the Word of God as a little child receives it is altogether beneath their dignity. They think that the Word of God, itself, is mistaken when it says, "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." They fancy that *their* thoughts are even a little higher than the thoughts of God! They are followers of nobody. They are leaders or, at any rate, they are "self-contained." They have their own revelation and each man of them is a god to himself. Very well, you may stand there by yourselves, you learned people! You may have your degrees, M.A., D.D., or whatever else you like, for you are those who follow nobody! But of the true people of God, it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb." These are *not* they who follow their own leading, striking out a path of their own. These are *not* the great eccentrics, or the wonderful originals, but these are they which *follow*—they are content to be merely followers—they do not aspire to be anything more than followers. But they are glad, however, to add that they are followers of the Lamb! "These are they which follow the Lamb."

There are other persons in the world who follow some one of their fellow men. Whatever he says is gospel to them! Whatever he has written is, of course, infallible. "Be you followers of me," says the Apostle Paul, but then he adds directly, "even as I, also, am of Christ." While we are children, we are necessarily under instructors, but we must take heed, as we grow in Grace, that we never follow an instructor so blindly as to follow him where he goes wrong. No, "to the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Every true instructor will beg you to see that, when he errs, you are not to err with him, but to keep a conscience and an understanding of your own so that it will not be said, "These are they who follow this or that eminent preacher or divine." But, "These are they which follow the Lamb." Mind that, dear Friends, for it is most important!

I know another company of people who follow "the church." That is a wonderful thing, you know, "the historic church." This is the great door of entrance into the church of Rome and many have been attracted to it, and have gone through it down into Hell! There are certain persons who think that "the church" cannot err, but I do not know a more erring community than that which is commonly called "the church"! Yet there are certain people who must follow the church wherever she goes and, as

she has gone to Rome, there they will also go! Or if they think she has gone to Oxford, there they will abide. Or if she has gone to Canterbury, there they will dwell. Well, I have great respect for some of these brethren, but I prefer to be numbered with those of whom it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Whether He goes to Rome, or to Geneva, or to Wittenberg, or to Canterbury, or to Smithfield amidst the martyrs' burning stakes, or among the misnamed Anabaptists, or the Methodists, follow the Lamb wherever He goes!

I have been sometimes called to book for saying—yet I will venture to say it again—that if I lived in a village, or if I lived in any other place where I knew there was a Baptist or other Dissenting Chapel, before I decided to attend it, I would want to know, first, "Is the Gospel preached there?" I am not so blindly wedded to any denomination whatever, that I should cling to the denomination if it did *not cling* to Christ! "Follow the Lamb wherever He goes." If you can hear sound doctrine concerning Christ preached anywhere, go and hear it! If it is in connection with those who also follow the Lamb in the waters of Baptism, show your preference for that form of worship, but do not cling merely to an old name and an old flag when Christ has gone from them. The first thing for your soul is to get near to Christ, to feed upon His Truth and so to let it be said of you, dear Friends, "'These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.' And if they do not hear the Gospel in one place, they will go to another, for they are not going to listen to false doctrine. They have, as sheep of Christ, received a taste by which they know what is the Truth of God and what is error. 'A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.' But when they hear their Shepherd's voice, they will follow that! 'These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.'" The church is all very well in its place, but the church has often lost her Lord. In the Song of Solomon we read how she went about the streets seeking Him. So I should not like to have to follow her wherever *she* goes—but it is safe and right to follow the Bridegroom wherever *He* goes. So let us keep to that and be among those that "follow the Lamb wherever He goes."

A further instruction is this. *We may always follow the lead of the Lamb of the atoning Sacrifice.* We can never follow it too closely in our thought. You know that you may get some one thought into your head and it may rule your whole being till you hardly know where it may lead you. Few men know the consequences of introducing any single doctrine into their minds, for it is pretty sure to bring another and another in its train! This is especially true about the doctrine of the Atonement offered by Christ, the Lamb of God, yet you may accept it without fear, whatever its consequences may be, and never be at all afraid to follow it wherever it goes!

For instance, when you think of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, dying in unutterable pain to redeem men, it gives you the true idea of the terrible blackness of sin. Well, follow out that thought and if you begin to be greatly depressed under a sense of sin—if conscience should sting and scourge your heart, if it should almost drive you to despair to think that

sin could not be put away except by the death of the Son of God—still follow out the thought, for the process will not hurt you! "Follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Though He should lead you into a very trying experience and a very humbling sense of your own guilt, go on still further with Him, for He who leads you into that gloom will lead you out of it in the most efficient manner—you need not be afraid to "follow the Lamb wherever He goes."

"If it is so," says one, "that the Son of God must die before sin can be put away, then it follows that there is no salvation out of Christ." Just so! Follow up that thought! Go on with it to its ultimate issues. Do not be afraid, even though the consequences should startle you. Rest assured that where the doctrine of the Cross may lead you, you may follow it quite safely. One thing I know, the doctrine of the Cross will never make you trifle with sin! It will never let you imagine that the death of the wicked is a slight matter. It will never make you indifferent as to the state of men when they pass into another world. "Follow the Lamb wherever He goes," and you will hate sin more and more—you will love souls more and more, you will have an intense awe of the Law of God—and you will have an intense love for the Person of your Redeemer. You cannot push this thought too far—it is a Truth of God about which you can never go to an extreme! No, I wish that you *would* go to any extreme that lies along this route, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes," as a matter of thought.

But now, once more, you may also very safely follow the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Atoning Sacrifice, in matters of fact. That is to say, you may be in this world, as far as you can in your measure, as Christ was. The man who believes in the doctrine of the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, will feel that sin is bitter and he will become very intolerant of sin. He will seek to put it down. He will try to purge it out of his own conduct and he will not endure it in his own family. Go on with that line of conduct and follow the Lamb wherever He goes! How can you tolerate that which cost the Son of God the bloody sweat of Gethsemane? How can you play with the dagger which pierced His heart? No, you must practically, in your life, hate the sins that made Him mourn and nailed Him to the tree! Alas, nowadays I see many who are trifling with sin. We Puritans, they say, are much too precise and too strict. Ah, Sirs, it is that preciseness and that strictness that are needed more and more and we shall never know how to live thus except we abide hard by the Cross of Christ! Unless we believe that sin cost Christ His life, we shall never have that holy enmity towards sin which we ought to have, that blessed intolerance of sin which ought to take possession of every Christian's heart and mind!

"Follow the Lamb wherever He goes." If you do, you will have to go outside the camp, just as He did, bearing His Cross. He went forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem—you will have to do the same. You will find people saying of you that they cannot endure you, you have become too religious, too strait-laced, and so on. Blessed are they who are not afraid of hard names, who, indeed, feel that if it is wrong in the judgment of the

world to follow Christ so closely, they intend to be more wrong, even as David said to Michal, "I will yet be more vile." God help us so to do! "Follow the Lamb wherever He goes," into the place of separation outside the camp.

If you follow the Lamb, you may be called to *suffer*, you may have to lose friends, you may come under the cruel lash of slander. You may, perhaps, have to lose this world's gains for righteousness' sake and holiness' sake—but whatever the cost may be, follow the Lamb, say to yourself—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes."

"The blood-spattered footprints of my Master shall receive mine! Not with equal strides, but still with gladsome footsteps, I will follow in His track, let that track lead where it may. What He did, I will do, after my measure." This is what we ought to do, Brothers and Sisters. How different our lives would be if we always worked them out by this rule—"What would Christ do in such a case?" I have sometimes got into a great fix of conscience when I have put to myself the question, "What would Christ do in such a case as this?" And once or twice I have not been able to answer. And then I have had to stand back a little and say, "Would Christ ever have been in circumstances similar to mine just now? Is there not some mistake farther back and had I not better go right back and begin again, somewhere or other, rather than keep on a track in which I cannot suppose my Lord to be?" Oh, that we might feel, from now on, that we will follow the Lamb wherever He goes, whatever the consequences may be!

Young Christian, I recommend that you, in starting out in the Christian life, aim at obeying your Lord's commands in every particular. If you have believed in Him, the first thing that you ought to do is to *be baptized*. "Follow the Lamb wherever He goes," and I am sure that He went down into the waters of Jordan and was baptized by John. And then the Holy Spirit rested upon Him and His Father said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When you have done that, go and give yourself to the Church of Christ, for the Lord Jesus Christ, from the very first, began to gather round about Him those who feared God—and He had a company of disciples who constituted His Church. Still keep on following the Lamb wherever He goes and if you do, you will be a very amiable, loving, generous, hearty, self-denying, laborious Christian. If you follow the Lamb wherever He goes, you will go about doing good. You will lay yourself out in service for the Master. Perhaps you will teach little children, for He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." Perhaps you will stand and preach in the streets, for He, by the hillside and on the mountain, and by the sea, always spoke the things of God. If you follow Him, you will do good in one way or another—and not be a lazy lie-a-bed in the Kingdom of Christ—expecting to be honored and rewarded for doing nothing at all.

"These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Brothers and Sisters, *are we not happy that we may follow Him?* His track leads to

rest, for He sits at the right hand of God! His track leads to victory, for the Lamb is enthroned and He will give us to overcome and to sit with Him upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and sits with the Father upon His Throne! Oh then, by that sweet ending, let us make a good beginning and a blessed, persevering continuance, in following the Lamb wherever He goes!

III. I close with this remark—our text IS SUGGESTIVE TO ALL WHO WOULD BE SAINTS.

You perceive that if you are to be true saints, first of all, you must trust Christ. A man does not follow another unless he has faith in him. Brethren, your way to Heaven lies in trusting yourself with Christ as a Sacrifice for sin—as the Lamb of God. Trust yourself with Him and you have begun the new life, you have started as a saint!

But, next, *this trust must be of a practical kind.* It is not said in our text, "These are they which trust the Lamb," merely, but, "These are they which *follow* the Lamb." You must do *what* He bids you, *as* He bids you, *because* He bids you and because you trust Him. You must begin, from this day forth, to show by your lives that your faith in Christ is no mere sentiment, but a vital active principle within your minds. In that way you shall find eternal life in trusting the Lamb and following Him.

But, if you follow Him, remember that *you must make no terms with Him.* "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." "Lord," you say, "I will follow You across the grassy lawn, or over the smoothly rolled road." No, no—you must make no conditions! You must follow Him up the crags and down into the marshes. You must follow Christ everywhere, with no picking and choosing of the road. Where He bids you, you must go. Where He leads you, you must follow. Will you do that? If so, you shall be His in the day of His appearing—but you must take that, "wherever," into the contract. "These are they which follow the Lamb *wherever* He goes." O Sir, will you follow Christ at this rate? If you will, you are Christ's man—this is the sort of soldier that He would enlist in His army—the man who is ready to follow Him wherever He goes!

I heard of a young man who wanted to be an officer in Napoleon's army and he came to get a commission wearing a fine new hat and a suit of clothes of the very neatest cut possible. And the officer asked him, "Sir, if you were in a situation with mountains on either side of you which you could not ascend, and there was no possibility of going back, and the enemy in front was at least ten times your number, what would you do in such a case as that?" He answered, "I should resign my commission." They did not make an officer of him, you may be sure of that, but there are plenty of that kind who, as soon as they come to a difficulty in the Christian faith, say, "Take my name off the roll! I did not bargain for this." Now, if you mean to be a Christian, you must "follow the Lamb wherever—wherever—*wherever* He goes."

And if you do this, *you must be like He is.* Christ and His followers must be of one mind. Christ the Lamb is not to be followed by the devil's lions. If you follow the Lamb, you must grow more and more lamb-like—and that means being more gentle, more meek, more self-sacrificing,

more ready to submit to the Divine will. The Lord make us so and may we be among the blessed people who shall have this for their epitaph—no, not for their epitaph, for they are not dead—but who shall have this for their *motto*, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes!"

Lastly, remember that Jesus came to the Communion Table and His followers should be like He in this respect, also. If there is any child of God who has forgotten this Truth up to now, let him no longer forsake the assembling of himself with God's people in the keeping of this sacred feast. God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 14.

The Church of God had undergone a very great trial. There had arisen a cruel and wicked persecuting system, described by John in his vision as a beast—a terrible dragon, of which we read that "it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." This was bad enough, but afterwards there arose another system of evil which was even more dangerous, because it was an *imitation* of the Truth of God. Another beast came up out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, yet he spoke as a dragon; and of him, John writes, "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads." I will not go into the symbolic meaning of these two beasts—it is sufficient to observe that they had very terrible power and one might have thought that under their successive attacks the Church of God would have been destroyed. Yet note how this chapter begins.

Verse 1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion.* Jesus is not dead! He still lives! He is not defeated—"a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion." He is not disturbed or troubled, but He stands in the posture of quiet confidence. "A Lamb stood on the Mount Zion." Jesus is not driven out of His Church, but He is still dwelling in the midst of His people. That is something, yet unbelief says, "Well, I can understand that John saw the Lord there, but had He any people with Him? Had He any Church? Listen—"I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion."—

1. *And with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.* They are all there, a vast number, a *complete* number, the exact number which in the seventh chapter of this Book had been described as sealed! They are all there without exception—not one of them is lost—they all stand fast as a great army surrounding their glorious Leader. Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, in the darkest times Christ has His Church still around Him! It is with Him as it was when the Lord said to Elijah, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him." Be of good courage! If your eyes are but anointed with the heavenly eye salve, you may see, as John saw, the Lamb on Mount Zion, surrounded by multitudes of faithful followers!

2. *And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and so the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.* As loud as thunder and yet as musical as the choicest notes from a band of harps—such is the testimony of the saints, such is the expression of their exultant joy in their Lord!

3. *And they sung, as it were, a new song before the Throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders.* See Brothers and Sisters, how little the powers of darkness can do? Not only are the saints all there, but they are singing! The devil cannot rob Christ of a single sonnet. The stanzas of our grateful praise shall continue to be poured forth, though all the dragons howl as they may! "They sung, as it were, a new song before the Throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders."

3. *And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.* There is a special redemption, a "redemption from the earth." For such redeemed men there is a special song which no others can learn—and that song will be sung by them in the darkest of all days, in the roughest of all weathers. When the dragons seem to triumph, Christ shall still have His praise, blessed be His holy name!

4. *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.* This is the Scriptural metaphor for those who have not turned aside to idol gods, or to false opinions, or to unholy practices. You remember how Paul longed to present the Corinthian Christians, "as a chaste virgin," to Christ—he desired that Christ might have all their love. These servants of God are of this sort, wholly the Lord's.

4. *These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.* Let no man deny, then, that there is a special and particular redemption of God's people. All men are not redeemed as these were redeemed, else the expression would be untruthful, or without meaning—"These were redeemed from among men." There is an elect company for whom Christ especially laid down His life! They are His and they are made to know that they are His, and to take the position of a blood-bought people who belong not to themselves, but to Him who has bought them with His blood. These are the hundred and forty and four thousand who stand on the Mount Zion with the Lamb in the midst of them.

5. *And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the Throne of God.* Kept, by Divine Grace, pure in doctrine, holy in life, devout in heart—these are the bodyguard of the Lamb, the chosen companions of the King of kings—whose reward shall be unspeakably great forever and ever.

6, 7. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.* The old interpreters used to understand these two verses as referring to the great Protestant Reformation. When the old dragon had

done His utmost against the Church of God and the thick darkness of the Middle Ages rested alike on the Church and the world, then God sent the Reformers, like flying angels, to preach the everlasting Gospel, and their special message was, "Worship not saints, angels, relics and crucifixes, but, 'worship Him that made Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.'"

8. *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.* Babylon always goes down when the Gospel is preached! The very flight of the angelic preachers is sufficient to make old Rome totter to her fall! So our fathers used to explain this chapter, for so they understood it. I am not sure whether it refers to that or to any other particular form of anti-Christ, but whatever it may be, whenever the Gospel is exalted, down goes the devil and down goes the whole Babylonian system.

9, 10. *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark on his forehead, or on his hand, 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 the Lamb.* How we ought to dread any collusion with deadly error, any fellowship with the hypocrisies and falsehoods of those who would deceive, for if we receive the mark of the beast either on our forehead, so as to have unbelieving *thoughts*, or on our hand, so as to *do evil* deeds, we shall have to suffer in company with Babylon, that great system of error which is only an imitation and a counterfeit of Christianity! What tremendously terrible words these are—"He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb"!

11-15. *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. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. And I looked, and behold a white cloud and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.* This is the ingathering of the people of God. You notice that this harvest of God is reaped by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, that Son of Man who sat upon the cloud, "having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle."

16. *And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.* May you and I form a part of the great harvest! May we be found among those golden sheaves which are to be the reap-

ing from Christ's great sowing when He gave Himself for His people, and was cast into the earth as a grain of wheat to die, that He might not abide alone!

17. *And another angel came out of the temple which is in Heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.* The reaper this time is an angel.

18. *And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; And cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.* This is the ingathering of the ungodly, they are not the Lord's harvest, they are the vintage of His wrath. This vintage is not reaped by Him who wears the golden crown, the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, but by one of His angels, who is bid to thrust in his sharp sickle and reap, for the hour of Divine judgment has at last come.

19. *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.* Shall any of us ever be cast into the great winepress of the wrath of god? We shall, if we continue growing upon the evil vine and are not grafted into Christ, the true and living Vine.

20. *And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.* By which striking symbol the Apostle describes the greatness and the terror of the overthrow which must happen to the ungodly when once God begins to deal with them in judgement! Oh, that the abounding mercy of God would give us a place in His great harvest and not leave us to be gathered in the vintage of His wrath, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—410, 356, 412.

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

JOB'S RESIGNATION
NO. 2457

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 22, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 11, 1886.

"Then Job arose, tore his clothes, and shaved his head, and fell to the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there: the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."
Job 1:20-22.

JOB was very much troubled and he did not try to hide the outward signs of his sorrow. A man of God is not expected to be a stoic. The Grace of God takes away the heart of stone out of his flesh, but it does not turn his heart into a stone. The Lord's children are the subjects of tender feelings—when they have to endure the rod, they feel the smart of its strokes—and Job felt the blows that fell upon him. Do not blame yourself if you are conscious of pain and grief, and do not ask to be made hard and callous. That is not the method by which Grace works—it makes us strong to bear trials, but we have to bear them! It gives us patience and submission, not stoicism. We feel and we benefit by the feeling—and there is no sin in the feeling—for in our text we are expressly told of the Patriarch's mourning, "In all this Job sinned not." Though he was the great mourner—I think I might truly call him the chief mourner of Scripture—yet there was no *sin* in his mourning. There are some who say that when we are heavy of heart, we are necessarily in a wrong spirit, but it is not so. The Apostle Peter says, "If need be you are in heaviness through manifold trials," but he does not imply that the heaviness is wrong. There are some who will not cry when God chastises them and some who will not yield when God strikes them. We do not wish to be like they—we are quite content to have the suffering heart that Job had—and to feel the bitterness of spirit, the anguish of soul which racked that blessed Patriarch.

Furthermore, Job made use of very manifest signs of mourning. He not only felt sorrow within his heart, but he indicated it by tearing his clothes, by shaving his head and by casting himself prone upon the ground, as if he sought to return to the womb of mother earth as he said that he would. And I do not think we are to judge those of our Brothers and Sisters who feel it right to wear the common tokens of mourning. If they give them any kind of solace in their sorrow, let them have them. I believe that, at times, some go to excess in this respect, but I dare not pass sentence upon them because I read here, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." If the black band should be worn for a

very long while and if the sorrow should be nursed unduly, as others judge, yet we cannot set up a standard of what is right for others—each one must answer for his conduct to his own Lord. I remember the gentleness of Jesus towards mourners rather than His severity in dealing with them—He has much pity for our weakness—and I wish that some of His servants had more of the same spirit. If you who are sorrowing could be strong. If the weeds of mourning could be laid aside, it might indicate a greater acquiescence in the Divine will, but if you do not feel that it should be so with you, God forbid that we should rebuke you while we have such a text as this before us, "Job arose, tore his clothes, and shaved his head, and fell to the ground." *And*, "in all this Job sinned not."

I want you, however, to notice that mourning should always be sanctified with *devotion*. It is very pleasant to observe that when Job had torn his clothes after the Oriental custom and shaved his head, (in a manner which, in his day, was not forbidden, but which under the Mosaic law was prohibited, for they might not cut their hair by way of mourning as the heathen did), and, after the Patriarch had fallen to the ground, he "worshipped." Not, *he grumbled.* Not, *he lamented*—much less that he began to imprecate and use language unjustifiable and improper—but he, "fell to the ground and *worshipped*." O dear Friend, when your grief presses you to the very dust, worship there! If that spot has come to be your Gethsemane, then present, there, your "strong crying and tears" to your God! Remember David's words, "You people, pour out your hearts"—but do not stop there, finish the quotation—"You people, pour out your hearts before Him." Turn the vessel upside down! It is a good thing to empty it, for this grief may ferment into something more sour. Turn the vessel upside down and let every drop run out—but let it be before the Lord. "You people, pour out your hearts before Him: God is a refuge for us." When you are bowed down beneath a heavy burden of sorrow, then take to worshipping the Lord and, especially, to that kind of worshipping which lies in *adoring* God—and in making a full surrender of yourself to the Divine will—so that you can say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That kind of worshipping which lies in the subduing of the will, the awakening of the affections, the bestirring of the whole mind and heart and the presentation of oneself to God over, again, in solemn consecration, must tend to sweeten sorrow and to take the sting out of it.

It will also greatly alleviate our sorrow if we then fall into serious contemplations and begin to argue a little and to bring facts to bear upon our mind. Evidently Job did so, for the verses of my text are full of proofs of his thoughtfulness. The Patriarch brings to his own mind at least four subjects for earnest consideration, out of which he drew great comfort. In like manner, you will do well, not merely to sit still and say, "I shall be comforted," but you must look about you for themes upon which to think and meditate to profit. Your poor mind is apt to be driven to and fro by stress of your sorrow, but if you can get an anchor hold on some great clearly ascertained Truths of God, about which you can have no possible doubt, you may begin to derive consolation from them.

"While I was musing," said David, "the fire burned," and it comforted and warmed him. Remember how he talked to himself as to another self, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." There are two Davids, you see, talking to one another, and cheering one another! A man ought always to be good company for himself—and he ought to also be able to catechize himself! He who is not fit to be his own schoolmaster is not fit to be schoolmaster to other people. If you cannot catechize your own heart and drill a Truth of God into your own soul, you do not know how to teach other people. I believe that the best preaching in the world is that which is done at home. When a sorrowing spirit shall have comforted itself, it will have learned the art of consoling other people. Job is an instance of this kind of personal instruction. He has three or four subjects which he brings before his own mind and these tend to comfort him.

I. The first is, to my mind, THE EXTREME BREVITY OF LIFE.

Observe what Job says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there." He came forth and he expected to go back to mother earth and there to lie. That is Job's idea of life and a very true one it is, "*I come forth, and I go back again.*" One asked a man of God, one day, "Will you tell me what life is?" The man of God stopped just a moment and then deliberately walked away. When his friend met him the following day, he said to him, "Yesterday, I asked you a question and you did not answer it." "But I did answer it," said the godly man. "No," rejoined the other, "you were there and you were gone." "Well, you asked me what life was, and that was my answer. Could I have answered your question better?" He answered and acted wisely, for that is a complete summary of our life here below—we come, and we go! We appear for a brief moment and then we vanish. I often, in my own mind, compare life to a procession. I see you, dear Friends, going by me, one by one, and vanishing—and others come on behind. But the point that I am apt to forget—and you do the same—is that I am in the procession and you are in it, too. We all count all men mortal but ourselves—yet all are marching towards that country from whose stream no traveler returns.

Well now, because life is so short, do you not see where the comfort comes? Job says to himself, "I came, and I shall return; then why should I worry myself about what I have lost? I am going to be here only a little while, then what need have I of all those camels and sheep?" So, Brothers and Sisters, what God has given us is so much spending money on our journey, to pay our fares and to help our fellow travelers. But we do not, any of us, need as much substance as Job had. He had seven thousand sheep. Dear me! What a task it must have been to drive and to feed such a large flock! "And three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen!" That is, a thousand oxen. "And five hundred she asses, and a very great household." Our proverb says, "The more servants, the more plagues," and I am sure it is true that the more camels, the more horses, the more cows, the more of such things that a man has, the more there is to look after and to cause him trouble! So Job seems to say to himself, "I am here for such a little time, why should I be carried away, as with a

flood, even when these things are taken from me? I come and I go—let me be satisfied if other things come and go. If my earthly stores vanish, well, I shall vanish, too. They are like myself—they take to themselves wings and fly away—and, by-and- by, I, too, shall take to myself wings, and I shall be gone." I have heard of one who called life, "the long disease of life." And it was so to him, for, though he did a great work for his Master, he was always sickly. Well, who wants a long disease? "There's the respect that makes calamity of so long life." We need, rather, to feel that it is not long, that it is short, and to set small store by all things here below and to regard them as things which, like ourselves, appear but for a time, and soon shall be gone.

Further, Job seems especially to dwell with comfort upon the thought, *"I shall return to the earth*, from which all the particles of my body originally came. I shall return there." "Ah," said one, when he had seen the spacious and beautiful gardens of a wealthy man, "these are the things that make it hard to die." You remember how the tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben went to Moses and said, "If we have found grace in your sight, let this land be given unto your servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." Of course, they did not need to cross the Jordan if they could get all their possessions on the other side. But Job had not anything this side Jordan, he was cleaned right out, so he was willing to go. And, really, the losses that a man has, which make him "desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better," are real gains! What is the use of all that clogs us here?

A man of large possessions reminds me of my experience when I have gone to see a friend in the country and he has taken me across a plowed field and I have had two heavy burdens of earth, one on each foot, as I have plodded on! The earth has clung to me and made it hard walking. It is just so with this world—its good things hamper us, clog us, cling to us like thick clay—but when we get these hampering things removed, we take comfort in the thought, "We shall soon return to the earth from where we came." We know that it is not mere returning to earth, for we possess a life that is immortal! We are looking forward to spending it in the true land that flows with milk and honey, where, like Daniel, we shall stand in our lot at the end of the days. Therefore we feel not only resigned to return to the womb of mother earth, but sometimes we even *long* for the time of our return to come!

A dear servant of God whom you would all recognize if I mentioned his name, was talking with me concerning our dear departed brother, Hugh Stowell Brown, and he said, "All the Brethren of my age and yours seem to be going Home. They are passing away. The fathers and the leaders are going and I could almost wish," he added, "that our Heavenly Father would put my name down as the next to go." I said that I hoped the Lord would not do so, but that our Brother might be spared to labor a while longer but that, if I might put in another name, I would plead for my own to go in there instead of his! Happily, we have nothing to do with the date of our going Home—it is out of our hands—yet we are glad to feel that when the time of our departure shall arrive, it will be no calamity, but a distinct advancement, for the Master to bid us to return to the dust from

where we came! "Return, you children of men," He will say, and we will joyfully answer, "Yes, Father, here we are, glad to stretch our wings and fly straight to yonder world of joy, expecting that even our poor bodies, by-and-by, at the trump of the archangel, shall come back to You, and we shall be like Your only-begotten Son, when we shall see Him as He is."

II. Secondly, Job seems to comfort himself by noticing THE TENURE OF HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. "Naked," he says, "came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there."

He feels himself to be very poor, everything is gone, he is stripped. Yet he seems to say, "*I am not poorer, now, than I was when I was born.*" I had nothing then, not even a garment for my back but what the love of my mother provided for me. I was helpless then—I could not do anything for myself whatever." One said to me, the other day, "All is gone, Sir, all is gone, except health and strength." Yes, but we had not as much as *that* when we were born. We had no strength, we were too weak to perform the least, though most necessary offices, for our poor tender frame. David often very sweetly dwells upon his childhood and still more upon his infancy—and we shall do well to imitate him. Old men sometimes arrive at a second childhood. Do not be afraid, Brother, if that is your case! You have gone through one period, already, that was more infantile than your second one can be—you will not be weaker, then, than you were at first!

Suppose that you and I should be brought to extreme weakness and poverty—we shall neither be weaker nor poorer than we were when we were born! "But I had a mother," says one. Well, there are some children who lose their mother in their very birth, but if you had a mother to care for you *then*, you have a *Father* to care for you now and, as a child of God, you surely feel that your mother was but the secondary agent to watch over you in your weakness! And God who gave that love to her and moved her to care for you will be sure to find that same love which flowed out of Him into her still stored up in His own bosom—and He will see you through. Do not be afraid, my Brother, my Sister, the Lord will see you through! It is amazing that after God has been gracious to us for 50 years, we cannot trust Him for the rest of our lives! And, as for you who are 60, 70, or 80 years of age—has He brought you this far to put you to shame? Did He bear you through that very weakest part of your life and do you think He will now forsake you? David said, "I was cast upon You from the womb," as if *then* he had none but God to help him! And will not He who took care of us, then, take care of us even to the end? Yes, that He will! Therefore let us be of good courage and let the poverty and weakness of our infancy, as we think of it, cheer us if we are weak and poor now.

Then Job adds, "However poor I may be, I am not as poor as I shall be, for naked shall I return to mother earth. *If I have but little, now, I shall soon have still less.*" We have heard of a rustic who, when dying, put a crownpiece into his mouth because he said that he would not be without money in another world—but he was a clown and everyone knew how foolish was his attempt thus to provide for the future! There have been

stories told of persons who have had their gold sewn up in their shrouds, but they took not a penny with them for all their pains. Nothing can be taken with us—we must go back to the earth, the richest as poor as the poorest, and the poorest no poorer, really, than the richest! The dust of great Caesar may help to stop a hole through which the blast blows and the dust of his slave cannot be put to more ignoble uses. No, poor and weak as we may be, we are not as poor and weak as we *shall* be, by-and-by, so let us just solace ourselves with this reflection. The two ends of our life are nakedness—if the middle of it should not always be scarlet and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, let us not wonder. And if it should seem to be all of a piece, let us not be impatient or complaining.

I want you to notice, also, what I really think was in Job's mind, that, notwithstanding that he was but dust at the beginning and would be dust at the end, yet, still, there was a Job who existed all the while. "I was naked, but *I was*. Naked I shall return there, *but I shall be there*." Some men never find themselves till they have lost their goods. They, themselves, are hidden away like Saul, among the stuff—their true manhood is not to be seen because they are dressed so finely that, though people seem to respect them—it is their *clothes* that are respected! They appear to be somebodies, but they are nobodies, notwithstanding all that they possess. The Lord brought His servant Job to feel, "Yes, when I had those camels, when I had those she asses, when I had those sheep, when I had those men servants, they were not myself. And now that they are gone, I am the same Job that I ever was. The sheep were not a part of myself, the camels were not a part of myself. I, Job, am still here, lying in my wholeness and integrity before God as much a servant of Jehovah in my nakedness, as I was when I wrapped myself in ermine."

O Sirs, it is a grand thing when God helps us to live above what we have and above what we have not! Then it is that He brings us to know ourselves as we are, in our God, not dependent upon externals, but maintained and strengthened by food of which the world knows nothing, which comes not from milk of cattle! Then are we robed in a garment that comes not from fleece of sheep and we possess a life that depends not on the swift camel—a true existence that is neither in flocks, nor herds, nor pastures, nor fields—but delights itself in God and keeps itself on the Most High. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there," says Job, but, "still it is I, the blessed of God, His same devoted servant who will trust Him to the end." That was good talk for Job's heart, was it not? Though it may not all have been said in words, I doubt not that something like it, or something much better passed through the Patriarch's mind and thus he solaced himself in the hour of his sorrows and losses.

III. But now, thirdly, and perhaps the most blessed thing, is what Job said concerning THE HAND OF GOD IN ALL THINGS—"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

I am so pleased to think that Job recognized *the hand of God everywhere giving*. He said, "The Lord gave." He did not say, "I earned it all." He did not say, "There are all my hard-earned savings gone." "Ah, me,"

he might have said, "all the care for those sheep, the dreadful expense of those camels and the trouble that I have been at with those oxen—and now they are all gone, it does seem hard." He does not put it so, but he says, "The Lord gave them to me. They were a gift and though they are gone, they were a gift from Him who had a right to take them back, for all He gives is only loaned. 'A loan should go laughing home,' and if God loans me these things, and now has called them back, I will bless His name for having let me have them so long."

What a sweet thing it is, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you can feel that all you have in this world is God's gift to you! You cannot feel that, you know, if you came by it dishonestly. No, it is not God's gift, *then*, and it brings no blessing with it. But *that which is honestly the result and fruit of your cheerful industry,* you may consider has come from God and if, in addition, you have really sanctified your substance and have given your fair proportion to help the poor and the needy, as Job did—if you can say that you have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy when you relieved her needs, then all that you have is God's gift! God's Providence is man's inheritance and your inheritance has come to you from God's Providence. Look at it all as God's gift—it will even sweeten that little loaf of bread and that tiny pat of butter which is all you may have to eat today or tomorrow—if you regard it as God's gift! It will soften that hard bed upon which you lie, wishing that you were somewhat better covered from the cold, if you think of it as God's gift. A slender income will give us much contentment if we can see that it is God's gift.

Let us not only regard our money and our goods as God's gifts, but also our wife, our children, our friends. What precious gifts they often are! A man is truly rich who has a good helpmeet! He is really rich who has godly children about him. Even though they may cost him much care, he is abundantly repaid by their affection. And if they grow up in the fear of the Lord, what a choice gift they are! Let us look at them all as God's gifts—let us not see them or anything else about the house without feeling, "My Father gave me this." Surely it will tend to draw the teeth of every sharp affliction if, while you have enjoyed the possession of your good things, you have seen God's hand in giving them to you.

Alas, some of you do not know anything about God! What you have is not counted by you as God's gift. You miss the very sweetness and joy of life by missing this recognition of the Divine hand in giving us all good things richly to enjoy.

But then, *Job equally saw God's hand in taking them away*. If he had not been a believer in Jehovah, he would have said, "Oh, those detestable Sabeans! Somebody ought to go and cut to pieces those Chaldeans." That is often our style, is it not—finding fault with the secondary agents? Job has nothing to say about the Sabeans or the Chaldeans, or the wind, or the lightning. "The Lord," he said, "the *Lord* has taken away." I believe that Satan intended to make Job feel that it was God who was at work when his messenger said, "The fire of God is fallen from Heaven and has burned up the sheep." "Ah," said Satan, "he will see that God is against him!" The devil did not succeed as he thought he had done, for Job could see that it was God's hand and that took away the sting of the stroke.

"The Lord has taken away." Aaron held his peace when he knew that the Lord had done it. And the Psalmist said, "I was dumb with silence, I opened not my mouth, because You did it." And Job felt just that. "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." Never mind the secondary agents! Do not spend your strength in kicking against this bad man or that—he is responsible to God for all the evil he has done. But at the back of these free agents there is a Divine Predestination, there is an over-ruling hand and even that which in men is evil may, nevertheless, in another light, be traced up distinctly to the hand of the Most High! "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away."

Will you remember that with regard to your children? If Job had lost only his eldest son, he might have needed much Grace to say, "The Lord gave him, and the Lord has taken him away." Job *had* lost his eldest son, but he had lost *six more sons*, and *he had lost his three daughters as well*. I have known a mother say, "My two dear boys sickened and died within a week—I am the most tried woman who ever lived." Not quite, not quite, dear Friend—there have been others who have excelled you in this respect. Job lost his 10 children at a stroke. O Death, what an insatiable archer you were that day, when 10 must fall at once! Yet Job says, "The Lord has taken away." That is all he has to say about it—"The Lord has taken away."

I need not repeat to you the story of the gardener who missed a choice rose, but who could not complain because the master had plucked it. Do you feel that it is just so with all that you have, if he takes it? Oh, yes! Why should he not take it? If I were to go about my house and take down an ornament or anything from the walls, would anybody say a word to me? Suppose my dear wife should say to the servant, "Where has that picture gone?" and the maid replied, "Oh, the master took it!" Would she find fault? Oh, no! If it had been a servant who took it down, or a stranger who removed it, she might have said something, but not when I took it, for it is mine. And surely we will let God be Master in His own house—where we are only the children—He shall take whatever He pleases of all He has loaned us for a while. It is easy to stand here and say this, but, Brothers and Sisters, let us try to say it if it should ever come to us as a matter of fact that the Lord who gave should also take away.

I think Job did well to call attention to this blessed Truth of God, that the hand of God is everywhere at work, whether in giving or in taking away. I do not know anything that tends more to reconcile us to our present sorrows, losses and crosses than to feel, "God has done it all. Wicked men were the agents, but still, God, Himself, has done it. There is a great mystery about it which I cannot clear up, and I do not need to clear it up. God has done it and that is enough for me. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.'"

IV. Job's last comfort lay in this Truth, that GOD IS WORTHY TO BE BLESSED IN THINGS—"Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Dear Friends, *let us never rob God of His praise, however dark the day is*. It is a funeral day, perhaps, but should not God be praised when there is a funeral, as well as when there is a wedding? "Oh, but I have

lost everything!" And is this one of the days when there is no praise due to God? Most of you know that the Queen's taxes must be paid—and our great King's revenue has the first claim upon us. Let us not rob our King of the revenue of His praise. "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." "Oh, but I have lost a child!" Yes, but God is to be praised. "But I have lost my mother." Yes, but God is to be praised. "I have a bad headache." Yes, but God is to be praised. One said to me, one evening, "We should have family prayer, my dear Sir, but it is rather late. Do you feel too tired to conduct it?" "No," I said, "I was never too tired, yet, to pray with my Brothers and Sisters, and I hope I never shall be." If it is the middle of the night, let us not go to bed without prayer and praise, for we must not rob God of His Glory! "There is a mob in the street," but we must not rob God of His Glory. "Our goods are getting cheaper and cheaper—we shall be ruined in the market." Yes, but let us not rob God of His Glory! "There is going to be, I do not know what, happening, by-and-by." Yes, but we must not rob God of His Glory.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job means that *the Lord is to be blessed both for giving and taking*. "The Lord gave," blessed be His name. "The Lord has taken away," blessed be His name! Surely it has not come to this among God's people, that He must do as we like or else we will not praise Him! If He does not please us every day and give way to our whims, and gratify our tastes, then we will not praise Him? "Oh, but I do not understand His dealings," says one. And are you really such a stranger to God and is God such a stranger to you, that unless He enters into explanations, you are afraid that He is not dealing fairly with you? O Sir, have you known the Lord for 20 years and cannot praise Him for everything? Brothers and Sisters, some of us have known him 40 years, now. Perhaps some of you have known the Lord for 50 years—are you always needing to have chapter, verse and explanations from Him before you will praise Him? No, no, I hope we have gone far beyond that stage!

God is, however, *especially to be praised by us whenever we are moved by the devil to curse*. Satan had said to the Lord concerning Job, "Put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face." And it seemed as if God had hinted to His servant that this was what the devil was aiming at. "Then," said Job, "I will bless Him." His wife suggested afterwards that he should curse God, but he would do no such thing, he would bless Him! It is usually a wise thing to do the very opposite to what the Evil One suggests to you. If he says, "Curse," you bless! Remember the story of a man who was going to give a pound to some charitable institution? The devil said, "No, you cannot afford it." "Then," said the man, "I will give *two* pounds. I will not be dictated to in this way." Satan exclaimed, "You are a fanatic!" The man replied, "I will give *four* pounds." "Ah," said Satan, "what will your wife say when you go home and tell her that you have given away four pounds?" "Well," said the man, "I will give *eight* pounds, now, and if you do not leave me alone, you will tempt me to give sixteen." So the devil was obliged to stop because the more he tempted him, the more he went the other way. So let it be with us! If the devil would drive us to curse God, let us bless Him all

the more, and Satan will be wise enough to leave off tempting when he finds that the more he attempts to drive us, the more we go in the opposite direction!

This is all meant to be sweet, cheery talk to suffering saints. How I wish that everybody here had an interest in it! What will some of you do—what are some of you *doing*, now that you have lost all? Wife dead, children dead and you are growing old, yet you are without God? O you poor rich people who have no interest in God! Your money must burn your souls! But you poor, poor, *poor* people who have not anything, here, and have no hope hereafter, how sad is *your* case! May God in His rich mercy give you even a little commonsense, for surely, commonsense would drive you to Him!

Sometimes in distributing temporal relief, we meet with persons who have been out of work and full of trouble. They may not have any bread to eat and we say to them, "Did you ever cry to God for help?" "No, Sir, we never prayed in all our life." What is the matter with you? Here is your child crawling about the house, shivering for lack of bread and clothes. "Did you never ask your Father for anything?" "No, never." Come, Friend, did God make you, or did you grow without Him? Did God create you? If He made you, He will have respect unto the work of His hands. Go and try Him, even on that low ground. Go and seek His face, even as His creature, and see whether He does not help you! O unbelief, to what madness do you go, that even when men are driven to starvation, they will not turn to God! O Spirit of God bless the sons of men! Even through their fears, sorrows and losses, bless them, and bring them in penitence to the Savior's feet, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOB 1:6-22.

Verse 6. *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.* Angels and all kinds of intelligent spirits had, as it were, a special, solemn, general assembly—a great field-day, or *levee*. Perhaps, in stars far remote, in various parts of the universe, there was celebrated, that day, a high festival of honor unto Jehovah, but since sin has come into the world, since even among the 12 Apostles there was a Judas, so in every assembly, even though it is an assembly of the sons of God, there is sure to be a devil—"Satan came also among them." If he is not anywhere else, he is sure to be where the sons of God are gathered together. Yet what impudence this is on his part, that he dares to come even into the assemblies of the saints! And what hardness of heart he must have, for he comes in as a devil and he goes out as a devil! The sons of God offer their spiritual prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the devil offers diabolical petitions suggested by his own malice.

7. *And the LORD said unto Satan, From where do you come?* He is obliged to give an account of himself. He cannot go a yard from his door without Divine permission.

7. *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.* Satan is always busy, never quiet—he cannot be still.

8. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant Job*—You see, Job is a man whom God calls His servant even in speaking to the devil, "Have you considered My servant Job?"

8. *That there is none like he in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and shuns evil?* God Himself gives Job that high character! He is a non-such, he stands alone among mankind—"There is none like he in the earth." "Have you reckoned him up? Have you taken his measure, O you accuser of the Brethren?"

9. *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Does Job fear God for nothing?* Even the devil could not bring a charge against Job's conduct, so he insinuated that his motives were not pure.

10. *Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?* "He finds that it pays, it answers his purpose to be devout."

10-11. *You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.* See, the devil measures Job's corn in his own bushel, but, happily, it was the measurement of a liar, so he measured amiss! There are still some who say, "Yes, it is a fine thing to be good when you are rich. It is a very easy thing to behave yourself aright when all goes smoothly with you. Would the man who is such a devout servant of God, now, be like that if he were in poverty, or if he were cruelly slandered, or if he were tested with contempt? Would the Grace of God carry him over those rough bridges? His religion is a fine thing, no doubt, but if he were tried and tested, we would see what he would do." Now, the Lord delights in proving the Graces of His people, for it brings great Glory to His name when experiments are made upon them to test them and try them—and to let even their greatest adversary know how true they are and what a Divine work it is which God has worked upon them!

12. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand.* Satan could go so far, but no farther. There is an, "only," in the permission granted to him—"Only upon himself put not forth your hand."

12, 13. *So Satan went forth from the Presence of the LORD. Now there was a day when Job's sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house.* That was a bad day for trouble to come. Satan selected that day because it was a joyful day and, therefore, it would make the trials of Job the more startling. Moreover, if Job could have had his choice, he would have preferred that his trouble should come when his sons and his daughters were praying, not when they were feasting.

14, 15. *And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yes, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and only I am escaped alone to tell you.* The bad

news comes to him all of a sudden, just when he is thinking of something very different. There is only one servant left to tell the tale—he was spared that Job might know that the news was true. If that one other servant had been killed, the tidings could only have reached Job as a rumor that might or might not be true, but now, one of his own servants tells him the sad story, so there is no mistake about it. Ah, the devil knows how and where to strike when he strikes! Yet this was only the first blow for poor Job, and there were heavier ones to follow.

16. *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and only I escaped alone to tell you.* Now, if that lightning had fallen on the Sabeans while they were robbing and plundering, one might not have wondered! But to fall on the flocks of a man of God who had clothed the naked with the fleece of his sheep and had presented many of the fat of the flock unto God in sacrifice—that did seem strange. This trial, too, comes right upon the back of the other—and this one appeared to be more severe than the former one because it seemed to come distinctly from God. "The fire of God"—the lightning, "is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep."

17. *While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yes, and slain the servants with the edge of the word; and I only am escaped alone to tell you.* Three such heavy blows will surely be enough to test the Patriarch, but a fourth messenger came with the direst news of all!

18-19. *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell you.* Did any other man ever have to endure such a complication of trouble, such agonies piled, one upon another, with no respite? Job must have felt well-near stunned and choked by these consecutive griefs!

20-22. *Then Job arose, tore his clothes, and shaved his head, and fell to the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there: the LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.* Oh, the triumphs of Almighty Grace! May God grant *us* such patience, if He sends us such trials, and unto Him shall be the glory evermore!

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

REASONS FOR A SINGULAR QUESTION
NO. 2458

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 29, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 14, 1886.

"What do you want Me to do for you?"
Mark 10:51.

THAT was a very strange question to ask a blind man. Everybody could see that he was blind—they could tell by the way he struggled through the crowd, that he was blind. His very voice, which had long been used in begging, would show that he was a blind mendicant. There he stood before the Savior and Jesus knew what he wanted, yet He put to him this singular question, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The great Son of David knew that the man who cried to Him, "Have mercy on me," really meant by that plea, "Lord, give me my sight." Yet our blessed Lord never asked a foolish question and never spoke an idle word. There is a deep meaning, a gracious reason, in all that He says. It will be my business at this time to try to show you the reasons for this question. And while I do so, I want to speak, not so much to you people who are converted and who know the Savior, but I want to address any here who have not yet been brought to the feet of Jesus, but who are longing to be saved by Him. Oh, that God would help you to follow me in each thing as I say it, that what is said may be done as it is said, God the Holy Spirit working by the Word!

In speaking about this singular question, I am going to show you, first, *what it did* and, secondly, *what it teaches.*

I. First, let us think of WHAT THIS SINGULAR QUESTION DID—"What do you want Me to do for you?"

Well, first, it brought out the two personalities. Listen to the question: "What do you want Me to do for you?" All the people round can see these two people—there is the ever-blessed Christ—and there is the blind beggar. These make the center of the group and the Lord Jesus Christ, by His question, brings these two into prominence—"What do you want Me to do for you?" I wish that I could fetch out of this great throng the sinner and the Savior. Dear Friend, you are standing face to face with Him at this moment! Forget the crowd, never mind these thousands of people—you have nothing to do with them, but only with yourself and the Savior! Another day you may think of other blind men, but just now think only of one blind person—and that one yourself. Another day you may think of other good men, but now think only of that one truly good Man, Jesus Christ, the Lord from Heaven, the Son of God who became Man that He might bless men! The Son of Man stands before you! Isolate

yourself from all else and let the two personalities stand out clearly before your eyes—yourself, a sinner, lost and ruined by your sin—and the Savior, who alone can help you and who stands prepared at once to bless you on the spot! That is what the question did, first—it brought out the two personalities.

Secondly, *it displayed Christ's boundless power*. Do you see that in it? He says, "What do you want Me to do for you?" It is not, "What can I do?" Not, "What power have I to do this or that?" But, "What is it that you will? What is your desire? What is your request?" Christ speaks like One who is prepared to meet it, be it what it may. What, then, do you need, Sinner? The Lord Jesus Christ can meet your need though it were deep as Hell, though it were greedy as famine, though it were dire as death. You cannot be in such a state that He cannot meet you in that state. You cannot have a need which He cannot supply. You cannot be under a disease which He cannot heal. You cannot be in the power of a devil whom He cannot cast out of you. You stand in the Presence of an Almighty Savior, God Over All, even though He died upon the Cross. In weakness He bled. In Glory He reigns and He is "mighty to save." Do you understand this great Truth of God? If there is any limit, it will be in your prayer, not in His power, and He puts the question to you, "What will you? What will you? What is it you really need?"

And, thirdly—and this seems very amazing to me—this question *gave wondrous scope*. What trustfulness the Lord Jesus had towards this blind man! Just before this miracle was worked, two young men, or their mother on their behalf, came to Jesus and asked Him to do for them whatever they should desire. They were two fine young men—two of His own chosen Apostles, James and John—highly honored men! And their mother was blessed among women to have such sons—she was the mother of Zebedee's children—but when she came with the request that her sons should sit at His right and left hand in His Kingdom, the Savior said that what she asked was not His to give. He would not give *cart blanche* to the mother of James and John, or to her sons—but to the blind man He did, in effect, give *cart blanche*! He said, "What will you have? I will give you whatever you want, you have only to ask and have." The Savior knew that the blind man's ambition would go no further than to lead him to ask that his eyes might be opened. And when He comes to deal with you poor, troubled, guilty souls, He knows what you most want, so He says to you, "Ask what you like."

"Lord, I am the biggest sinner out of Hell." "I will save you." "Lord, I need a new heart." "I will give it to you." "Lord, I need to be made a new man altogether, repairs and mending are of no use. I am like an old gun, to make it of any service, lock, stock and barrel must all be new." "I will do it for you." "But, Lord, it will need a great effort to take *me* to Heaven." "I will do it for you. Come, Sinner, open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Big vile Sinner, the Savior gives you carte blanche! He puts a signed check into your hand and leaves you to fill it up with whatever you will because He knows that your desires all lean one way. Those desires are, "Lord, forgive me. Lord, renew me. Lord, save me." And He is ready to

give you anything of that kind. Your Master sets open all the barrels in His cellar—they are full of the Water of Life and He lets them flow in rivers at your feet as He says to you, poor thirsty one—

"Stoop down, and drink, and live."

Come to your Master's banquet, for the chosen and the fatlings are killed and, "all things are ready." Feed upon them all if you have appetite enough, for He says to you, concerning spiritual food, "Eat abundantly, O Beloved!" There is no stint and no limit in the question! "What do you want Me to do for you?" gives you full scope—plenty of sea room—as the sailors say. O big Sinner, ask some great thing of your great Savior, for it is clear from the text that you may do so!

I think, also, that by this question the Savior *fixed the blind man's mind on the blessing he needed*. The Lord Jesus wished blind Bartimaeus to know what he really needed. I believe that there are many people who pray after a very poor fashion, for they really do not know for what they are praying. "I want to be saved," says one. Do you know what being saved is? "Oh," says the person, "I want to be converted." But do you know what being *converted* means? I believe that many people who go into the Enquiry Room to seek the Savior, if they knew what they were seeking, would run away sooner than get it, but they do not know what it is. "I want to be saved from going to Hell," says one. Now, mark you, that is *not* salvation! Every murderer wants to be saved from the gallows! Every thief wants to avoid the policeman and if that is all you want, I have little comfort to give you. What Christ comes to do is to save you from your *sins*—to save the drinkers from getting drunk—to save the liar from saying what is not true. He has come into the world to save the dishonest from being dishonest! To save the lazy from being lazy! To save the ungenerous from being selfish and grasping. He has come to save the blasphemer from his blasphemy and the Sabbath-breaker from his Sabbath-breaking! His name is called Jesus, "for He shall save His people from their sins."

Jesus wanted this blind man to know what he really needed and He wants you, Sinner, to know what you really need. And, therefore, He puts this question to you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" that you may settle distinctly in your mind what it is that you are seeking. May God the Holy Spirit enable you to do so!

II. Now I come to the second head of my discourse, which is, WHAT THIS QUESTION TEACHES US—"What do you want Me to do for you?"

It teaches us much more than I can tell you in a single sermon, but it does teach us, I think, very plainly, that *prayer should be personal*—"What do you want Me to do for you?" There was, just now, a host of us bowing our heads in the attitude of prayer, but how many of us were really praying? The prayer that is offered in the mass often has no prayer in it. He who would have eternal life must ask for it for *himself*, and by himself. It is quite right to have family prayer—I bless God that I cannot remember a time when I was not one of those who gathered night and morning in my father's house to pray. It is a very delightful thing to have been brought up to attend Prayer Meetings and to join in public prayer

with the people of God—but when a man is seeking Christ, he must pray alone. He will not need to be told that. He will be sure to do it.

His difficulty will sometimes be to find a place where he can get alone. I have known some seekers get down a saw-pit, or behind a haystack, or upstairs in a room where they could lock the door. Some have had to get into the street and walk to and fro, that they might feel themselves alone with God. O Sirs, to go to church and say with a crowd, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," may bring no blessing to the troubled spirit! But to get quite alone and cry, "O God, have mercy upon me, for Your dear Son's sake! I am a miserable sinner, but O Lord, deal with me in mercy, I pray You. Save me for Jesus Christ's sake." That is the way to pray! The Savior put it to Bartimaeus, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Oh, that the Holy Spirit would, at this moment, make each one of you conscious of your personal need! That He would put a pang into your heart which nobody else could bear for you, a hunger and a thirst which could not be allayed by anybody else's eating and drinking, but which would require that *you* should *personally* feed upon the Lord Jesus and *personally* drink of the Water of Life, or else you must die!

I think the Master, in that question to the blind beggar, brings out the personality of the seeker as well as His own Personality—to come back to the point where I began. He would have us, individually, come to Him *as an individual* and ask of Him just what we need, each one for himself, for we must be gathered to Him one by one, repenting one by one, believing one by one—and we must be born again one by one! Therefore He asks of each one the question, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Another thing that is taught us in this question is that *prayer should be a distinct act of the will.* "What do you want Me to do for you?" I will suppose that, guided by the Holy Spirit, I have picked out the right person and that person is now thinking, "Yes, I long to find eternal life and to obtain all that my soul needs at the hands of Christ." Well now, in your seeking, do not depend merely upon the use of pious words and think that when you have repeated certain sentences, you have prayed! Do not go and hunt up a church collect, or a form of prayer written by some eminent Dissenter and fancy that you can pray by saying those words! No, you must *will* what you want—"What do you want Me to do for you?" Suppose that you desire to be freed from a certain sin? If that is the most important petition you can present to God at this time, just will it before the Lord. Say, "O God, my heart is intently set upon mastering that sin and getting rid of it. I will that You would work this miracle within me, that You would break the neck of that habit, that You would deliver me from the iron heel of that strong temptation of mine!" May God help you to *will* that! Or else, "Lord, I want at once to get peace through believing in Your Son, Jesus Christ, but I hardly know what it means, or how it is to be obtained. If I did, I would get it, or if I found that I could not get it, I would ask You to enable me to secure this priceless blessing!" Oh, that the blessed Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is the Lord of the renewed will, would make you will to believe in Christ and make you will to

submit yourselves completely to Him, that He might be to you your sole and only Savior, your Lord and your God!

That kind of willing is really praying! It is the will setting in motion the other powers of the mind. You know that the will of man is a very crooked thing and also a very powerful thing. John Bunyan, in his *Holy War*, makes, "my Lord Will-Be-Will" governor of the town of Mansoul, and a domineering fellow he was, too, lording it over everybody! "My Lord Will-Be-Will" never yields to Christ if he can help it. "My Lord Will-Be-Will" is a sturdy defender of the rule of Diabolus and he holds out against the Prince Emmanuel as long as he can! Therefore the Savior attacks him and says, "What will you? What do you will that I should do to you?"

I can truly say, Brothers and Sisters, that my will towards the Savior is this, "Lord Jesus, do anything You please with me. Let me live, or let me die, only let Your will be done in me." My will towards the Lord Jesus is that He would deliver me from my sin, that He would be *everything* to me—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption and that He would abide in me and make me to abide in Him henceforth and forever. Is your will like that? If so, will away—will away with all your might! Say, "Lord, I will, I will, I will, I desire, I request, I entreat, I beg that You would forgive me, that You would take me to be Your servant, that You would break off from me the fetters of my old habits, that You would make me like Yourself, Lord, that is what I will and I will it with all the energy of my nature! My proud heart, the proudest, perhaps, that ever beat against You, now bows at Your feet willingly and cheerfully asking that Your will may be done."

So, this question, "What do you want Me to do for you?" teaches us that there must be personal prayer and the distinct willing of what we desire Christ to do for us.

But, dear Friends, I think that the text also shows us that the prayer which wins its way with Christ should be *an act of the understanding*. "What do you want Me to do for you?" I have no fault to find with those who always preach, "Believe in Christ," except that I wish they would sometimes tell the people *what is to be believed* and what believing really is! Now, Friend, you say, "I wish I could find the Savior tonight." But do you know who the Savior is? What do you want of Christ? There should be an intelligent apprehension in the mind of what is desired from Him. Bartimaeus, when he was asked what he needed, said, "Lord, I need my sight." Now, dear Hearers, we desire that you know enough about your Bibles and enough about yourselves, and enough about the Savior to understand what is meant by being saved! What are the things that make up salvation? How are men saved and what is requisite for their Salvation?

This leads me to say to you, "Search the Scriptures and try to understand God's Word." People who are converted without properly understanding the way of salvation may come to comprehend it, by-and-by, and be genuine Christians. But there is a large number of supposed converts who have no right understanding. They generally go back very

soon— they blunder in and they blunder out again—for if the understanding is not converted as well as the affections, it is as though but half the man were converted! I have read of an old Saxon king who wanted to be a Christian and yet desired to go where his ancestors went. So he said that he would stand with one leg in the baptismal font and be half-baptized! That style of conversion will not do—we want you to come to Christ with your whole understanding! Know you not that you have sinned, that you have broken God's Law? What you need is Divine forgiveness! Know you not that your heart is always inclined to sin? What you need is a complete change of nature—a new birth, a regeneration!

I beg those of you who have that sincere desire to be right, to become diligent hearers of the Word, that you may know what it is to *be* right. What says the Lord to you? "Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." "Listen diligently," says the Word of God. Many, I am afraid, think that they are to believe in Christ without knowing what to believe—they are to receive from Him without knowing what it is they need! But the Savior works by means of light, knowledge and understanding. Seek to have the Light of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your darkness and then you can come before God with the right kind of prayer, when the intellect goes with the will, and the heart wills what the understanding knows what the soul requires!

Once more, *prayer, especially when you are seeking the Savior, should be definite*. What a lot of praying there is that prays for everything in general and nothing in particular! I was reading a very good illustration, given by an eminent minister, upon this point. He says, "Why was it that the Boers in South Africa were able to hold their own against the best-trained British troops on a certain lamentable occasion? Why, because the ordinary soldier fires at the enemy in the mass and so, much of his ammunition is often lost. But the Boer, from his childhood, never wastes a shot! When he is out in the open and he sees a lion, he aims so as to hit the animal's heart—and many of them are such shots that they are never known to miss the object at which they aim. Consequently, every time a Boer shot at our men, he killed somebody, and such soldiers as those are terrible adversaries on the field of battle."

There are some people who pray, as it were, like a man shooting at a whole regiment—they fire anything, *at* anything! But the man who wins his suit at the Throne of Grace is the man who prays distinctly for some one thing that he wills to have. He says, "That is what I need, and that is what I am going to have if it is to be had." And he prays for that one thing just as an archer aims at the center of the target and then deliberately draws the bowstring and lets the arrow fly so that it sticks in the gold. David said, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You"—like an arrow—"and will look up," to see which way it goes. A great deal of praying is like runaway knocks at a door, but the right sort of praying knocks at the door and waits till it is opened!

Now, dear Hearer, if you are seeking anything from Christ, try to know what you are seeking, then ask for it and keep on asking till you get it! It may be that your great need is a broken heart—then pray for it. Or, is it

that you want to be delivered from a fierce temptation? Then, pray for it. Or, is it that you want faith in Christ? Then pray distinctly for that. "What do you want Me to do for you?" This is the way of salvation—the Lord makes us see what it is we need and sets us praying for it—He bids us believe in Jesus Christ and He *gives us the faith we lack*—and so we are saved. This is a kind of education that is helpful to a man all his life.

"Oh, but!" says one, "I have been praying for mercy." Yes, so had blind Bartimaeus. He cried, "Have mercy on me." But, you see, our Lord's question proves that this is a loose way of talking. So now say what you *really* need. Come to the point, pray definitely. Bartimaeus answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Come to the point in like definite fashion. "Well, Sir," you say, "I asked the Lord to forgive my sin." Yes, did you say *what* sin? It would be a great mercy if you would confess it. I remember one who used to pray the Lord to have mercy upon him for his sin, but he never found peace till he said, "Lord, I have been an abominable drunk—have mercy upon me and deliver me from the drink." Then it was that God gave him what he asked! It may be that the sin which has laid hold of you is one that I hardly like to mention and, therefore, *you* have never mentioned it to God. But out with it now! Out with it! David was never restored to the favor of God until, in confessing his sin, he learned to call a spade a spade! He had robbed poor Uriah of his wife and then he had so managed matters that Uriah had been killed in battle! And David used, no doubt, to say to others, "It was a very lamentable accident." But he never had any piece of mind while that guile, that cunning, that craft, was in his heart—it was only when he fell down upon his face before the Lord and cried, "Deliver me from *blood-guiltiness*, O God," that God could rightly deal with his sin!

There are some diseases that a physician cannot cure till he throws them out on the skin. You know how it was with the leprosy. If a Jew had it on his hand, or on his face, they examined him and if they found the leprosy only here and there, they said, "This is a bad case," and they shut him up by himself, for he was a leper. But if a man came to the priest covered all over with white scales of leprosy, so that there was not a single part of him that was sound and you could not put a pin's point anywhere upon a portion of his body that was not affected—if he was leprous all over from head to foot—*then* the priest said, "That man is clean." You see, the disease had at last come out on his skin and it would go away. So, when you are willing to fully confess your sin and to throw it all out of the system by that confession—I do not mean by telling it to a *priest*—God grant that you may never be so foolish as to do that! When you are willing to confess your sin to the Lord, Himself, and say to Him, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight," then it is that you shall get the blessing! You must be definite in the confession of your sin.

You must also be definite in pleading the promises of God. There is no prayer like that which a man presents when he gets a grip of a Divine promise! For instance, this utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Open

your Bible at Matthew 12:31. Put your finger on that passage and say, "Lord, this is Your Word; fulfill it to me!" Plead definitely with God His own promise and say to Him, "Do as You have said." This is the kind of praying that never yet met with a repulse! Answers of peace shall surely come to those who have become thus definite in their prayers!

I trust, dear Friends, that I have led, by God's Spirit, many of you so far. I have tried to be very practical with you and to put the Truth of God very plainly. But let me say to you that prayer, to be acceptable, must not only be personal, and an act of the will, and an act of the understanding, and also definite, but *it should be very bold*. This blind man says, "Lord, You ask me what I would have, and my answer is, 'Lord, that I might receive my sight.'" I wonder what a pair of eyes would be worth? Said one, "I have a flower in my garden, and I know a person who would give 10,000 pounds to see one like it." "No, no," said his friend, "a person would never give 10,000 pounds to see a *flower*." Then he mentioned the name of a rich man who was blind and the second speaker said, "Oh, yes! I see that what you said is true." What would a blind man give for a pair of good eyes? If I were to go into a shop and say to the man in charge, "Will you give me a pair of spectacles?"—I daresay he would reply, "I do not see why I should *give* them to you." But I do not think I would *ever* go and ask a doctor to give me a pair of eyes! It was a bold request—was it not?—for this blind beggar to say, "Lord, give me a pair of eyes!"

If you would succeed in prayer, you must be bold! You must lay aside your modesty. If you had to ask of Christ only what you deserve, it would not take you long, for you deserve nothing but His wrath. Therefore, do not begin to ask on the ground of merit and, inasmuch as you deserve nothing, yet need everything, go in and be a bold beggar! Say, "Lord, save me tonight." Yes, put it, "tonight!" "Lord, save me, perfectly." Yes, put it, "perfectly!" "Lord, give me a new heart and a right spirit." Do not ask the Lord to clean up the old one—pray for a new one right out! "Lord, make a saint of me." That is right, do *not* ask the Lord to make a whitewashed sinner of you! Pray, "Lord, make me Your child." Do not say, "Make me as one of Your hired servants," but say, "Take me into Your family. Let me be Your child!" Make a bold prayer of it.

I remember that when I was collecting the money for the building of this Tabernacle—not for myself, but for the building of this House of Prayer—I said, "Dear Friends, I feel very bold about this matter. If it were a little thing, I might feel a little timid, but inasmuch as it is a very great thing, and that I want to build a very large house for God's worship, I open my mouth wide and ask for great things!" Little things will not serve your turn. Little mercy is no good for you. Little forgiveness will not suit you. Then come to the foot of the great Savior and say, "Lord, I, am the chief of sinners, but take me as I am and save me. Save me outright! Save me now!" Why should He not? He delights to do it! Oh, that of His great mercy you might find it so at this very hour!

I feel upon me a conviction that there are some who will come and put their trust in Jesus now. Lie down at His feet. Say, "I never will leave ex-

cept You bless me." This is God's own message—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Some of you have been hearing me a very long time. I love to look at your faces but when I see you, I always pray that you may be saved. I say to myself, "When will God bring that good man in? His wife and many friends pray for him. When will he be decided?" I look upon another and I say, "When will that elderly woman be converted? She has children who pray for her." I look elsewhere—no, I will not look exactly that way, but you know, my Friend, whom I mean when I say, "When will that brother be brought in? He has a praying wife, yet he is not saved." I cannot understand some of you husbands. I suppose that there are many more men than women in this congregation—there are often five men to three women in the congregation—yet when they come to join the Church, the women are probably three times as many as the men! I am half afraid it is as much as that, certainly two to one of those who really give their hearts to Christ. How do you make this out? Some of you husbands come here as regularly as your wives come, yet you do not know the Savior, and they do! Are you going to be parted forever? Are you going to die in your sins? Oh, let it not be so! Lord God, convert them by Your Grace, convert them now! Let us pray that it may be so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:31-43; 19:1-10.

Luke 18:31-33. *Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again.* Our Lord Jesus Christ often talked to His disciples about His death. Before the time for it came He foresaw it, He thought and spoke much of it, He even dwelt upon the terrible details of it very minutely—"He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death." Ah, dear Friends, when our Lord Jesus died for us, He knew what He was doing! There are some men who, without a moment's consideration, could do a brave notion, but they could not sit down and coolly calculate all the consequences of doing it. If they find themselves unexpectedly in the face of imminent danger—if they see a person needing to be saved from peril, they make a rush for it, and the daring deed is done. But here our Savior deliberately thinks and talks about His death, yet He never flinches, or looks back, but He prepares His heart for the solemn event and sets His face like a flint to go through it all that He may save the souls of His people! We, also, ought to think and talk much of our Lord's death since He thought and spoke so much of it.

34. *And they understood none of these things.* They could not make out what He meant. It was plain enough, but they could not believe that it would be so.

34-36. *And this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. And it came to pass that as He was come near unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.* The blind man asked, as the familiar hymn puts it—

"What means this eager, anxious throng,
Which moves with busy haste along?"

37, 38. *And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. And he cried, saying Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me.* If he could not see, he could hear! So, dear Friends, like this blind man, use what senses you have. "Faith comes by hearing." And so it came to this man, and as soon as he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by, he began to pray to Him. Oh, that some of you would also pray to Him as soon as you hear that He is near! Deep down, from your very soul, let this cry go up, "Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me."

39. *And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace*! I think I hear them saying, "Do not make such a disturbance! The Master is preaching and we are losing His words through your noise. What is all that clamor about? Can you not have more respect to the Son of David than to cry in that fashion?"

39. *But he cried so much the more, You Son of David, have mercy on me.* That is a good thing for you, also, to do, not only to keep on crying to the Lord Jesus, but to grow more importunate when others rebuke you! If you are seeking the Savior, do not be put back—if others would hinder you, be the more resolute, the more determined to be heard by Him!

40. *And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought to Him.* Jesus had been walking along. The crowd making way for Him, but He was stopped by the cry of a blind beggar—"Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought to Him"—

40, 41. *And when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What do you want that I should do for you? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.* A plain question and a very distinct answer. What is it that you, dear Friends, want of Jesus? Could you all tell if the question were put to you? What is it that you would have the Lord do for you? Do you know? This man knew and when we know, as he did, what we need from Christ, we shall soon get it! The sad fact concerning many people is that though they are not blind with their natural eyes, they are so blind in heart that they cannot see their own needs.

42, 43. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight: your faith has saved you. And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God.* Christ has only to speak and the great work is done at once! The salvation of a soul from the power of sin is not the work of weeks—it can be done in a single moment. "Immediately he received his sight and followed Him." That is beautiful! As soon as he could see, he looked for Christ and then followed Him, "glorifying God." He clapped his hands and followed Jesus, shouting and crying, "Blessed be God, I have found my sight! The darkness is over and the light has broken in upon my soul."

43. *And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

Luke 19:1, 2. *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was the chief among the publicans and he was rich.* Jesus Christ had just blessed a blind man who was poor, so poor that he was a common wayside beggar—will He bless the rich man, too? Oh, yes! He knows no distinction of persons! He is ready to bless all classes—whether they are rich or poor is nothing to Him.

3. *And he sought to see Jesus, who He was.* Possibly he had not much respect, but he had great curiosity. He would like to see the Man about whom everybody was talking—"He sought to see Jesus, who He was."

3. *And could not for the press, because he was little of stature.* The crowd round about him was so thick that the little short man could not see over the heads of the tall people! Though he pushed and tried to get in front, there was always some bigger body before him, so that he could not see the great Teacher.

4. *And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree*—Do you not see the little short man running in front of the throng and climbing up a tree that stood in the way? Rich men do not generally climb trees, but here was a man whose curiosity overcame his dignity, so he, "climbed up into a sycamore tree"—

4, 5. *To see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him.* Cannot you imagine that you see the blessed Master stopping and looking up at that tree? Somehow He always made Himself one with those whom He meant to bless! When He spoke to the blind man, He stood, as if He were, Himself, blind, and asked Him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And now He stops under this sycamore and looks up at curious Zacchaeus as if He, too, were taken with a fit of curiosity, and asks, "Who is that up in this tree?" "He looked up and saw him"—spied him out—

5. *And said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.* Oh, how astonished must the little Jew have been when he heard Christ's words! Never was a man so taken with surprise before, but with the word there came a Divine softness into the heart of the chief of the publicans and He yielded to that singularly condescending invitation, that strangely unexpected command!

6. *And he made haste, and came down; and received Him joyfully.* A great change had been suddenly worked in him—the opening of the blind man's eyes was not at all more remarkable than the renewing of the heart of Zaccheus! "He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully."

7. *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying That He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.* I wonder where He could have gone and *not* been a guest with a man that was a sinner? But Zacchaeus was thought to be a sinner beyond ordinary sinners. Our Lord still loves to be the guest of a man that is a sinner! He still wants a place where He can stay. O man, you who are a sinner, ask Him home with you! O woman, you who are in your very trade, a sinner, ask Him home with

you and we will say again, not murmuring, but *joyfully*, "He has gone to be a guest with one who is a sinner."

8. *And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.* That was a grand proof that the conversion of Zacchaeus was genuine! I should like to see the same kind of proof in many professors whom I know—"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." I remember one who was converted in this place and he at once gave £50 to some good project, and I said to his brother, "I think your brother is converted." He answered, "I hope he is, but he is a dreadful skin-flint." "But," I replied, "only yesterday, he gave £50 to such-and-such a work." "Ah, then," said the brother, "I am sure he is converted, for nothing but the Grace of God would make him do such a thing as that!" Now Zacchaeus was, no doubt, a man of that kind—one who loved his money and kept it to himself as long as he could—but now that he is converted, he says, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor"—

8. *And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* He acts in charity and justice, for he is determined to do the right thing with his substance. You see, he was a rich man, so his money was a source of trouble. The blind beggar had no such difficulty, for he had not any money that he could distribute when he was converted. But this rich man—this camel, as our Savior called such men, went through the eye of a needle by the Grace of God and thus the Lord proved the reality of His conversion!

9. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he, also, is a son of Abraham.* "He does not look like it. He has become a tax-gatherer for the Romans. He has oppressed his own countrymen. But he is a son of Abraham and salvation has come to him."

10. *For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* If, at this time, we ask our Lord Jesus, "Where are You going, Divine Master?" His answer still is, "I am come to seek and to save that which was lost." "Have You come after those who think themselves good enough without You?" He shakes His head and says, "I am a Physician and the whole have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The Gospel of the Grace of God is for the guilty! If you are not guilty, there is no Gospel for you. But if you are guilty and confess it, to you is the Word of this salvation sent!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—433, 499, 568.

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

"BETTER THAN WINE"
NO. 2459

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 2, 1872.

"Your love is better than wine."
Song of Solomon 1:2.

THE Scriptural emblem of wine, which is intended to be the symbol of the richest earthly joy, has become desecrated in process of time by the sin of man. I suppose in the earlier ages when the Word of God was written, it would hardly have been *conceivable* that there could have existed on the face of the earth such a mass of drunken men and women as now pollute and defile it by their very presence. For man, nowadays, is not content with the wine that God makes, but he manufactures some for himself of which he cannot partake, at least in any abundance, without becoming drunk. Redeem the figure in our text, if you can, and go back from the drinking customs of our own day to more primitive and purer times, when the ordinary meal of a man was very similar to that which is spread upon this communion table—bread and wine—of which men might partake without fear of evil effects. But do not use the metaphor as it would now be understood among the mass of mankind, at least in countries like our own.

"Your love is better than wine." In considering these words, in the spirit in which the Inspired writer used them, I shall, first of all, try to show you that *Christ's love is better than wine because of what it is not.* And, secondly, that *it is better than wine because of what it is.* Next, we will examine the marginal reading of the text which will teach us something about *Christ's love in the plural*—"Your *loves* are better than wine." And then, lastly, we will come back to the version we have before us, in which we shall see *Christ's love in the singular*, for the love of Christ, even when it is described in the plural, is always one—though there are many forms of it—it is always the same love.

I. First, then, I want to prove to you that CHRIST'S LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS NOT.

It is so, first, *because it may be taken without question.* There may be and there always will be in the world, questions about wine. There will be some who will say, and wisely say, "Leave it alone." There will be others who will exclaim, "Drink of it abundantly." While a third company will say, "Use it moderately." But there will be no question among upright men about partaking to the fullest of the love of Christ! There will be none of the godly who will say, "Abstain from it," and none who will say, "Use it moderately"—all true Christians will echo the words of the Heavenly Bridegroom, Himself, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved."

The wisdom of imbibing freely of the love of Christ shall never be questioned, even, by the pure spirits in Heaven—this is the wine which they themselves quaff in everlasting bowls at the right hand of God, and the Lord of Glory, Himself, bids them quaff it to their fill! This is the highest delight of all who know Christ and have been born again by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit! This is our greatest joy while here below and we can never have too much of it! Yes, we may even swim in this sea of bliss, and there shall be none who shall dare to ask any of us, "What are you doing there?" Many delightsome things, many earthly joys, many of the pleasures of this world are very questionable enjoyments. Christians had better keep away from everything about which their consciences are not perfectly clear—but all our consciences are clear concerning the Lord Jesus and our heart's love to Him! So, in this respect, His love is better than wine.

Christ's love is also better than wine *because it is to be had without money*. Many a man has beggared himself and squandered his estate through his love of worldly pleasure—and especially through his fondness for wine. But the love of Christ is to be had without money. What says the Scripture? "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The love of Christ is unpurchased and, I may add, it is unpurchaseable! Solomon says, in the eighth chapter of this Book, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised." And we may as truly say, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for the love of Christ, it would be utterly despised." The love of Jesus comes to His people freely! Not because they deserve it, or ever will deserve it—not because, by any merits of their own, they have won it, or by any prayers of their own, they have secured it—it is spontaneous love. It flows from the heart of Christ because it must come, like the a stream that leaps from an ever-flowing fountain. If you ask why Jesus loves His people, we can give no other reason than this—

"Because it seemed good in His sight."

Christ's love is the freest thing in the world—free as the sunbeam, free as the mountain torrent, free as the air! It comes to the child of God without purchase and without merit and, in this respect, it is better than wine.

Again, Christ's love is better than wine *because it is to be enjoyed without spoiling*. The sweetest matter on earth which is, for a while, pleasant to the taste, sooner or later sours upon the palate. If you find honey, you can soon eat so much of it that you will no longer relish its sweetness. But the love of Jesus never yet soured upon the palate of a new-born soul. He who has had most of Christ's love has cried, "More! More! More!" If ever there was a man on earth who had Christ's love in him to the fullest, it was holy Samuel Rutherford, yet you can see in his letters how he labored for suitable expressions while trying to set forth his hungering and thirsting after the love of Christ. He says he floated upon Christ's love like a ship upon a river And then he quaintly asks that his vessel may founder, and go to the bottom, till that blessed stream shall flow right over the masthead of his ship! He wanted to be baptized into the love of Christ, to be flung into the ocean of his Savior's love—and this is what the true Christian always longs for.

No lover of the Lord Jesus has ever said that he has had enough of Christ's love. When Madame Guyon had spent many a day and many a month in the sweet enjoyment of the love of Jesus, she penned most delicious hymns concerning it, but they are all full of craving after more—there is no indication that she wished for any change of affection to her Lord, or any change in the object of her affection. She was satisfied with Christ and longed to have more and more of His love. Ah, poor drunk, you may put away the cup of devils because you are satiated with its deadly draft, but never did he who drinks of the wine of Christ's love become satiated or even content with it! He always desires more and yet more of it.

Further, Christ's love is better than wine *because it is without sediment*. All wine has something in it which renders it imperfect, and liable to corruption—there is something that will have to settle, something that must be skimmed off the top, something that needs purifying. So is it with all the joys of earth—there is sure to be something in them that mars their perfection. Men have sought out many inventions of mirth and pleasure, amusement and delight, but they have always found some hitch or flaw somewhere. Solomon gathered to himself all manner of pleasant things that are the delight of kings. He gives us a list of them in the Book of Ecclesiastes—"I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brings forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of rings and of the provinces: I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts." But his verdict concerning all of them was, "Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit."

But he who delights himself in the love of Christ will tell you that he finds no vanity and vexation of spirit *there*, but everything to charm and rejoice and satisfy the heart! There is nothing in the Lord Jesus Christ that we could wish to have taken away from Him! There is nothing in His love that is impure, nothing that is unsatisfactory. Our precious Lord is comparable to the most fine gold! There is no alloy in Him. No, there is nothing that can be compared with Him, for, "He is altogether lovely," all perfections melted into one perfection and all beauties combined into one inconceivable beauty! Such is the Lord Jesus and such is His love to His people—without anything of imperfection needing to be removed!

The love of Christ, too, blessed be His name, is better than wine *because it will never, as wine will, turn sour*. In certain stages of development and under certain influences, the sweet ferments and vinegar is formed instead of wine. Oh, through what fermentations Christ's love might have passed if it had been capable of being acted upon by anything from outside! Oh, how often, Beloved, have we grieved Him! We have been cold and chill towards Him when we ought to have been like coals of fire! We have loved the things of this world, we have been unfaithful to

our Best-Beloved, we have suffered our hearts to wander to other lovers—yet never has He been soured toward us and never will He be! Many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it. He is the same loving Savior, now, as He always was, and such He will always be. And He will bring us to the rest which remains for the people of God. Truly, in all these respects, because there are none of these imperfections in His love, it is better than wine!

Once more, Christ's love is better than wine *because it produces no ill effects*. Many are the mighty men who have fallen down slain by wine. Solomon says, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." But who was ever slain by the love of Christ? Who was ever made wretched by this love? We have been inebriated with it, for the love of Christ sometimes produces a holy exhilaration that makes men say, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell." There is an elevation that lifts the soul above all earthly things and bears the spirit up beyond where eagles soar, even into the clear atmosphere where God communes with men! There is all that sacred exhilaration about the love of Christ, but there are no evil effects arising from it. He that will, may drink from this golden chalice, and he may drink as much as he wills, for the more he drinks the stronger and the better shall he be!

Oh, may God grant to us, dear Friends, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge! I feel sure that while I am preaching on such a theme as this, I must seem, to some here present, to be talking arrant nonsense, for they have never tasted of the love of Jesus! But those who have tasted of it will, perhaps, by my words, have many sweet experiences called to their minds which will refresh their spirits and set them longing to have new draughts of this all-precious love which infinitely transcends all the joys of earth! This, then, is our first point—Christ's love is better than wine because of what *it is not*.

II. But, secondly, CHRIST'S LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS.

Let me remind you of some of the uses of wine in the East. It was often used as a medicine, for *it had certain healing properties.* The good Samaritan, when he found the wounded man, poured into his wounds, "oil and wine." But the love of Christ is better than wine—it may not heal the wounds of the flesh, but it does heal the wounds of the spirit. Do not some of you remember when your poor heart was gashed through and through by the dagger of Moses, when you felt the wounds caused by the Law of God, the deadly wounds that could not be healed by human hands? Then, how sweetly did that wine of Christ's love come streaming into the gaping wounds!

There were such healing drops as this—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or such as this, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Or this, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Or this, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Or this, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none

else." I cannot, perhaps, quote the text that dropped like wine and oil into *your* wounds, but I remember well the text that dropped into mine. The precious vial of wine that healed up all my wounds as in a moment and made my heart whole was that text I quoted last, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Wine made by man cannot be medicine to a broken heart, nor can it heal a wounded spirit—but the love of Jesus Christ can do this and do it to perfection!

Wine, again, was often *associated by men with the giving of strength*. Now, whatever strength wine may give or may not give, certainly the love of Jesus gives strength—strength mightier than the mightiest earthly force—for when the love of Jesus Christ is shed abroad in a man's heart, he can bear a heavy burden of sorrow. If he could have the load of Atlas piled upon his shoulders, and if he could have all the care of all the world pressing upon his heart, yet if he had the love of Christ in his soul, he would be able to bear the load! The love of Christ helps a man to fight the battles of life. It makes life, with all its cares and troubles, a happy one. It enables a man to do great exploits and makes him strong for suffering, strong for self-sacrifice, and strong for service. It is wonderful, in reading the history of the saints, to notice what the love of Christ has fitted them to do! I might almost say that it has plucked up mountains and cast them into the sea, for things impossible to other men have become easy enough to men on fire with the love of Christ. What the Church of Christ needs, just now, to strengthen her, is more love to her Lord and her Lord's love more fully enjoyed in the souls of her members! There is no strengthening influence like it.

Wine was also frequently used as the *symbol of joy* and certainly, in this respect, Christ's love is better than wine. Whatever joy there may be in the world (and it would be folly to deny that there is some sort of joy which even the basest of men know), yet the love of Christ is far superior to it! Human joy derived from earthly sources is a muddy, dirty pool, at which men would not drink did they know there was a stream sweeter, cooler and far more refreshing. The love of Jesus brings a joy that is fit for angels, a joy that we shall have continued to us even in Heaven, itself, a joy which makes earth like Heaven! It is, therefore, far better than wine.

It is better than wine, once more, for *the sacred exhilaration which it gives*. I have already spoken of this—the love of Christ is the grandest stimulant of the renewed nature that can be known! It enables the fainting man to revive from his swooning. It causes the feeble man to leap up from his bed of languishing and it makes the weary man strong again. Are you weary, Brothers and Sisters, and sick of life? You only need more of Christ's love shed abroad in your heart! Are you, dear Brother, ready to faint through unbelief? You only need more of Christ's love and all shall be well with you. I would to God that we were all filled with it to the fullest, like those Believers were on the day of Pentecost, of whom the mockers said that they were full of new wine! Peter truly said that they were not drunk, as men supposed, but that it was the Spirit of God and the love of Christ filling them with unusual power and unusual energy

and, therefore, men knew not what it was! God grant to us, also, this great power, and Christ shall have all the glory of it!

III. But now, passing rapidly on, for our time is flying, the marginal reading of our text is in the plural—"Your *loves* are better than wine"—and this teaches us that CHRIST'S LOVE MAY BE SPOKEN OF IN THE PLURAL because it manifests itself in so many ways. I ask all renewed hearts that have been won to Jesus, the virgin souls that follow Him wherever He goes, to walk with me in imagination over the sacred tracks of the love of Christ.

Think, Beloved, of *Christ's Covenant love*, the love he had to us before the world was! Christ is no new lover of His people's souls—He loved them before the daystar knew its place, or the planets began their mighty revolutions! Every soul whom Jesus loves now, He loved forever and ever! What a wondrous love was that—infinite, unbounded, everlasting—which led Him to enter into Covenant with God that He would bear our sins and suffer our penalties, that He might redeem us from going down into the Pit! Oh, the Covenant love of Jesus! Some dear souls are afraid to believe this Truth of God—let me persuade them to search the Scriptures till they find it, for, of all the doctrines of Holy Writ, I know of none more full of consolation to the heart, when rightly received, than the great foundation Truths of Divine Predestination and Personal Election. When we see that we were eternally *chosen* in Christ, eternally *given* to Christ by His Father, eternally *accepted* in the Beloved and eternally *loved* by Christ, then shall we say, with holy gratitude, "Such love as this is better than wines on the lees, well refined."

Think next, Beloved, of *Christ's forbearing love*—the love which looked upon us when we were born, saw us full of sin and yet loved us—the love which saw us when we went astray from the womb speaking lies—the love which heard us profanely speak, wickedly think and obstinately disobey, yet loved us all the while! Let the thought of it ravish your heart as you sing—

"He saw me ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved me, notwithstanding all!
He saved me from my lost estate,
His loving kindness, oh, how great!"

Thus were we the subjects of Christ's electing love and forbearing love.

Yes, but the sweetness to us was when was realized *Christ's personal love*, when, at last, we were brought to the foot of His Cross, humbly confessing our sins. May I ask you who can do so, to go back to that happy moment? There you lay at the foot of the Cross, broken in pieces, and you thought there was no hope for you. But you looked up to the crucified Christ and those blessed wounds of His began to pour out a stream of precious blood upon you—and you saw that He was wounded for *your* transgressions, that He was bruised for *your* iniquities, that the chastisement of your peace was upon Him—and that with His stripes *you* were healed! That very instant your sins were all put away! You gave one look of faith to the bleeding Savior and every spot and speck and stain of your sin were all removed—and your guilt was forever pardoned!

When you first felt *Christ's forgiving love*—I will not insult you by asking whether it was not better than wine. Oh, the unutterable joy, the in-

describable bliss you felt when Jesus said to you, "I have borne your sins in My own body on the tree, I have carried the great load of your transgressions, I have blotted them out like a cloud, and they are gone from you forever!" That was a love that was inconceivably precious! At the very recollection, our heart leaps within us and our soul does magnify the Lord!

Since that glad hour, we have been the subjects of *Christ's accepting love*, for we have been "accepted in the Beloved." We have also had *Christ's guiding love*, *providing love* and *instructing love*. His love in all manner of ways has come to us and benefited and enriched us. And, Beloved, we have had *sanctifying love*—we have been helped to fight this sin and that, and to overcome them by the blood of the Lamb. The Spirit of God has been given to us so that we have been enabled to subdue this ruling passion and overcome that evil power. The Lord has also given us *sustaining love* under very sharp troubles. Some of us could tell many a story about the sweet upholding love of Christ—in poverty, or in bodily pain, or in deep depression of spirits, or under cruel slander, or reproach. His left hand has been under our head while His right hand has embraced us. We have almost courted suffering, itself, by reason of the richness of the consolation which suffering times have always brought with them! He has been such a precious, precious, precious Christ to us that we do not know how to speak well enough of His dear name!

Then let us reflect with shame upon *Christ's enduring love to us*. Why, ever since we have been converted, we have grieved Him times without number! As I have already reminded you, we have often been false to Him—we have not loved Him with the love which He might well claim from us. Yet Christ has never cast us away, but still, to this very moment He smiles upon us! He says to His own brethren whom He has bought with blood and to each one of us, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. I have espoused you unto Myself forever. I will never leave you, nor forsake you." He uses the most kind and endearing terms towards us to show that His love will never die! Glory be to His holy name for this! Is not His love better than wine?

There is one word I must not leave out and that is, *Christ's chastening love*. I know that many of you who belong to Him have often smarted under His chastening hand, but Christ never smote you in anger. Whenever He has laid a cross on your back, it has been because He loved you so much that He could not keep it off. He never took away a joy without meaning, thereby, to increase your joy, and it was always done for your good. Perhaps we cannot, at present, say that the Lord's chastising love has always been sweet to us, but we shall say it, one day, and I think I must say it now! I bless my dear Master for everything He has done to me and I can never tell all that I owe to the anvil, the hammer, the fire and the file! Blessed be His name, for many of us can say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." Therefore will we put in Christ's chastising love among the rest of His loves and say of it, "This love, also, is better than wine." We would sooner have the chastisements of God than the pleasures of the world! We would rather have God's cup full of gall than the devil's cup full of the sweetest wine he ever

made! We prefer to take God's left hand instead of the world's right hand—and would sooner walk with God in the dark than walk with the world in the light! Will not every Christian say that?

Beloved, there are other forms of Christ's love yet to be manifested to you. Do you not, sometimes, tremble at the thought of dying? Oh, you shall have—and you ought to think of it now—you shall have special revelations of *Christ's love in your dying moments*! Then shall you say, like the governor of the marriage feast at Cana, "You have kept the good wine until now." I believe we have hardly any conception of what comfort the Lord pours into His people's souls in their dying moments. We do not need those comforts, yet—we could not bear them *now*—but they are laid up in store and when we need them, they will be brought out. And then shall our spirits find that the Lord's promise is fulfilled, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

And then—but perhaps I had better be silent upon such a theme—when the veil is drawn and the spirit has left the body, what will be the bliss of *Christ's love to the spirits gathered with Him in Glory?*—

"Oh, for the bliss of flying,
My risen Lord to meet!
Oh, for the rest of lying
Forever at His feet!
Oh, for the hour of seeing
My Savior face to face!
The hope of always being
In that sweet meeting place!"

Or, as Dr. Watts puts it—

"Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall over Your beauties rove
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of Your love."

Then think of *the love of the day of our resurrection*, for Christ loves our bodies as well as our souls and, arrayed in glory, these mortal bodies shall rise from the tomb! Oh, the bliss of being like our Lord and being with Him when He comes in all the splendor of the Second Advent—sitting as assessors with Him to judge the world and to judge even the angels! And then to be in His triumphal procession when He shall ascend to God and deliver up the Kingdom to the Father and the Mediatorial system shall be ended, and God shall be All in All! And then to be forever, forever, forever, "forever with the Lord," with no fear of the soul dying out, with no dread of the false doctrine of annihilation, like a grim specter always crossing our blissful pathway! With a life coeval with the life of God and an immortality divinely given, we shall outlast the sun! And when the moon grows pale and wanes forever, and this old earth and all that is therein shall be burned up, yet shall we be forever with Him! Truly, His love is better than wine! It is the very essence of Heaven! It is better than anything that we can conceive!

God grant us foretastes of the loves of Heaven in the present realization of the love of Jesus, which is the same love, and through which Heaven, itself, shall come to us!

IV. Now, I must have just a few minutes for my last point, and that is, CHRIST'S LOVE IN THE SINGULAR—a theme which might well suffice

for half a dozen sermons at the very least! Look at the text as it stands—"Your love is better than wine."

Think, first, of *the love of Christ in the cluster*. That is where the wine is first. We talk of the grapes of Eshcol, but these are not worthy to be mentioned in comparison with the love of Jesus Christ as it is seen, in old eternity, in the purpose of God, in the Covenant of Grace and, afterwards, in the promises of the Word, and in the various Revelations of Christ in the types and symbols of the Ceremonial Law. There I see the love of Christ in the cluster. When I hear God threatening the serpent that the Seed of the woman would bruise his head, and when, later on, I find many prophecies concerning Him who is mighty to save, I see the wine in the cluster, the love of Christ that is *really there*, but not yet enjoyed! What delight it gives us to even look at the love of Christ in the cluster!

Next, look at *the love of Christ in the basket*, for the grapes must be gathered and cast into the basket before the wine can be made. I see Jesus Christ living here on earth among the sons of men—gathered, as it were, from the sacred vine and, like a cluster thrown into the basket. Oh, the love of Jesus Christ in the manger of Bethlehem, the love of Jesus in the workshop of Nazareth, the love of Jesus in His holy ministry, the love of Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness, the love of Jesus in His miracles, the love of Jesus in His communion with His disciples, the love of Jesus in bearing shame and reproach for our sakes, the love of Jesus in being so poor that He had not where to lay His head, the love of Jesus in enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself! I cannot hope to enter into this great subject! I can only point it out to you and pass on.

There is, first, Christ's love in the cluster, and next, there is Christ's love in the basket. Think of it and, as you think of it, say, "It is better than wine."

But oh, if your hearts have any tenderness towards Him, think of *the love of Christ in the winepress*. Look at Him there, when the cluster in the basket begins to be crushed! Oh, what a crushing was that under the foot of the treader of grapes when Christ sweat, as it were, great drops of blood! And how terribly did the great press come down, again, and again when He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair! And He hid not His face from shame and spitting! But oh, how the red wine flowed from the winepress—what fountains there were of this precious sweetness when Jesus was nailed to the Cross—suffering in body, depressed in spirit and forsaken of His God! "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?" These are the sounds that issue from the winepress and how terrible and yet how sweet they are! Stand there and believe that all your sins were borne by Him—and that He suffered what you ought to have suffered—and, as your Substitute, was crushed for you—

"He bore, that you might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

Yes, Beloved, Christ's love in the winepress is better than wine!

Now I want you to think of *the love of Christ in the flagon*, where His precious love is stored up for His people—the love of His promises, given

to you. The love of His Providence, for He rules for you. The love of His intercession, for He pleads for you. The love of His representation, for He stands at the right hand of the Father as the Representative of His people. The love of His union with His people, for you are one with Him—He is the Head and you are the members of His body—the love of all that He is, all that He was and all that He ever shall be, for in every capacity and under all circumstances He loves you and will love you without end! Think of His rich love, His abundant love towards His people! I call it love in the flagon, this love of His to all the saints which He has stored up for them.

And then, Beloved, not only think of but enjoy *the love of Christ in the cup*, by which I mean His love to *you*. I always feel, when I get to this topic, as if I would rather sit down and ask you to think it over, than try to talk to you about it. This theme seems to silence me. I think, like the poet—

"Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise."

Love to *me*! Dear child of God, think of it in this way—let me speak for you—"He loves *me*! He, a King, loves me! A King? The King of Kings, HE loves *me*! *God*, very God of very God, loves *me*!" Strange conjunction, this, between the Infinite and a worm! We have heard and read romantic stories of the loves of emperors to poor village maidens, but what of these? Worms were never raised so high above their meaner fellow worms as the Lord Jesus is above us! If an angel loved an ant, there would be no such difference as when Jehovah-Jesus loves us! Yet there is no fact beneath Heaven, or in Heaven, that is so indisputable as this fact—that He loves us if we are His believing people! For this we have the declaration of Inspiration. No, Brothers and Sisters, we have even more than that to confirm it beyond all question, for we have His own death upon the Cross! He signed this document with His own blood in order that no Believer might ever doubt its authenticity!

"Herein is love." "Behold what manner of love" there is in the Cross! What wondrous love is there! Oh, then, let us have Christ's love in the cup, the love that we may daily drink, the love that we may personally drink just now at this moment, the love which shall be all our own as if there were no others in the world—and yet a love in which ten thousand times ten thousand have an equal share with ourselves!

God bless you, dear Friends, and give you to drink of this wine! And if any here know not the love of Jesus Christ, I pray the Lord to bring them to know it. May He renew their heart and give them faith in Him, for whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God! "He that believes on Him is not condemned." His great Gospel Word is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." May the Lord confirm this Word by His Spirit, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 26:20, 21; 27:1-9.

We will read a short passage in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, commencing with the 26th chapter, and the 20th verse.

Isaiah 26:20. *Come, my people, enter into your chamber, and shut your doors about you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.* There is never a flood for the wicked without an ark for the righteous! Never shall a storm sweep over the earth till God has prepared a great rock wherein His people may be hidden.

21. *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 earth has often covered up the evidences of human guilt. Blood shed in battle has soaked into the soil and men have forgotten the violence of tyrants and conquerors, but the earth shall disclose her blood. Sin, though it is sown in the earth, shall spring up like wheat, but to a terrible harvest. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Isaiah 27:1. *In that day the LORD, with His sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent.* That is to say, He will punish those who are like leviathan—the proudest, the greatest and the most powerful sinners shall not escape Divine Justice. God's Laws are not like cobwebs, meant to catch the little flies while the great ones break through—He will strike leviathan—He will surely punish the mightiest sinners of the earth.

1. *Even leviathan that crooked serpent.* Hard to come at, difficult to find, he shall not escape the sword of the Lord.

1. *And He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.* If men should try to hide from God in Hell, itself, yet would He find them. There is no possibility that any offender shall escape His all-seeing eyes.

2, 3. *In that day sing you unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.* Thus the Lord reveals the tenderness of His love to His Church. Then follows a remarkable passage in which, it seems to me, we have the plan of salvation plainly set out. First, here is man at enmity with his Maker.

4. *Fury is not in Me: who would set the briers and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.* Men who are at enmity with God little know how terrific is the force of His strength. They are like dry thorns when the fire catches them and nothing burns more readily. The bush upon the common, when some wild youth sets fire to it, suddenly blazes up, crackles and is gone—so will it be with the ungodly. God has but to go through them and they shall be destroyed. But now comes a message of mercy.

5. *Or let him take hold of My strength.* This is what the repenting and believing sinner does—he lays hold of Christ—he takes the strength of God to be his defense and then the strong God, instead of being a terror, becomes a comfort to him.

5, 6. *That he may make peace with Me and he shall make peace with Me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root.* Taking root should be well looked after by the Christian. Some professors have no root—they are all leaf and flower, but they have no root and, consequently, they soon wither and die. Happy is that man who is rooted and grounded in the faith!

6, 7. *Israel shall bloom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. Has He struck Israel as He struck those that struck him?* No. God strikes His people, but He never strikes them as He does their enemies. He strikes His people, as old Trapp says, with the palm of His hand, as a man may strike His child, but He strikes His enemies with His fist, as one would dash His foe to the ground! There is a great difference between the chastisements of God's people and the righteous judgments that fall upon the wicked.

7, 8. *Or is Israel slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by Him? In measure, when it shoots forth, You will debate with it.* God always chastens His people in measure. He makes a debate about it. He weighs their troubles in scales and their sorrows in balances.

8. *He stays His rough wind in the day of the east wind.* He never sends too many troubles at a time. If the east wind is blowing, He does not send His rough wind. We have much to thank God for, that He times our troubles. Had they come an hour before, they might have been too much for us. Had they been kept back a week longer, they might have overthrown us. God knows when to chasten His people and He will always chasten them at the right time.

9. *By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.* When one of the old Puritans was afflicted with a very painful disease—perhaps the most painful to which flesh is heir—he kept crying out, "The use, Lord? The use, Lord? Show me the use of it." This should be the point at which the Christian should always aim.

9. *When he makes all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.* You see, the Israelites had piled up stones and held them in veneration. But when God brought them back to Himself, they counted those stones to be but as common chalkstones of the valley. It is a good thing for us, when our sins bring us no pleasure, when they are only like common stones of the street. When we break our images and dash down our idol gods, we show that we prize them no longer. The Lord make this to be the issue of all our trials! Then will we bless Him for our troubles as for our chief mercies.

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

GOD'S FIRE AND HAMMER
NO. 2460

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 12, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1886.

"Is not My Word like as a fire? says the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"
Jeremiah 23:29.

As we noticed while reading the chapter, there were a great many pretenders in the times of Jeremiah, so that when the true Prophet of God came forth and declared, "Thus says the Lord," he was met by false prophets who contradicted him and said something the very reverse of what he had to say and yet prefaced their utterance with the same declaration, "Thus says the Lord." This, of course, tended very much to harden the hearts of the people against the Divine message, and it also grievously embarrassed Jeremiah. He hardly knew how to meet it—it seemed to checkmate him.

This evil also greatly grieved the Lord, for it was not according to His mind that these men should pretend to speak under His Inspiration and to speak as if they felt the burden of the Lord, when He had never sent them and they had not delivered His message. He therefore gave a test by which the true could be distinguished from the false. In the verse before our text, the Lord asks, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" That which these false prophets said was but chaff compared with the Divine message delivered by Jeremiah, which was as wheat—so the Lord puts the matter thus, "You hear these men speak and you are interested and pleased, and you say to yourselves, 'This is fine oratory, this man has a grand way of speaking.' You admire his style, his eloquence, his depth of thought and all that, but I say to you, 'Is not My Word like as a fire?' It comes not as a thing of beauty, but with force, with energy. It comes to you, not that you may stand and look at it, but it has within itself a burning and consuming force. And by this shall My Word be known from the word of man—that it has a mystic power about it which cannot be found in the words of men. And it is a breaking force, as when a mighty hammer strikes the rock, and strikes it again and again till even the solid granite is compelled to yield."

The false prophets had no such force in their words. They did not pretend to have any fire in what they said. They spoke very pleasingly and very flatteringly—they made the people vain—they told them, in effect, that nothing would happen but what would delight them! They might go on in their sins, but it would be all right. They might indulge the most bland hopes that everything in the future would be according to their own wishes. That was man's word, but when the Lord spoke by His servant, Jeremiah, His Word was "like as a fire." There was something burn-

ing about it—human nature did not like it—but human nature was made to feel its force and power! When the false prophets spoke, they would bow and cringe to the people and say all manner of soft and pleasing things. But when Jeremiah spoke, in the name of Jehovah, every Word seemed to tell upon his hearers! It was as when a mighty man lifts up a sledgehammer and brings it down with all his force upon the stone he means to break. The message did not comfort the ungodly, but it broke their hearts, for the Prophet was seeking, if possible, to separate them from their sins.

We will begin with the statement which is made so plainly here, *the Word of God has power in it.* It is like fire. It is like a hammer. It is like fire and hammer combined and it operates upon men's hearts much in the way in which the fire and hammer of the smith operate upon the iron, fashioning and shaping it according to his design. When I have spoken upon this point, I will seek, first, to *illustrate this statement.* And then *to put it to a practical test.*

I. First then, THE WORD OF GOD HAS POWER IN IT.

And first, the Lord Himself says *it is like a fire.* I am now speaking of God's Word. Not, mark you, God's Word as it is declared by certain men. Not as it may come to you garnished with force of eloquence, beauty of poetry, animation of expression and the like—but the Word of God *itself*—the Truths of God which are revealed in this wonderful Book, the Truths which the Holy Spirit has been pleased to make known to the sons of men. These are "like as a fire." You who are the people of God must often have felt greatly comforted, encouraged and cheered when you have been hearing the Gospel, just as when, on a cold day, and you are half numbed with cold, if your eyes are blindfolded you know when you are coming near a fire by the genial glow which you feel. You delight yourself in the Word of the Lord as you warm your hands at a bright cheery fire! Is it not so when God's Word is preached? Men may laugh at us and say that we have a very sweet tooth for certain doctrines, but even dogs know when they are well fed. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib"—and we are not so foolish that we do not know what Truth it is that cheers and comforts our heart and what kind of teaching it is that makes us glad in the midst of the winter of our discontent.

There is far too much teaching, nowadays, that will not comfort a mouse! You might hear it to all eternity and never be relieved of a single ounce of the burden of life. You might come in and out of the House of God and you might, perhaps, say, "Yes, it is very pretty," but what is *that* to a man who has the burden of life to carry and the battle of life to fight? But when you hear the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, it lifts you up out of your discouragements and makes you say, after all, "It is worthwhile to live, it is worthwhile to suffer, it is worthwhile to press forward, for we see the great love the Lord has toward us, and what good things He has laid up in store for them that love Him." The Word of the Lord is like a fire, for it warms and comforts the hearts of His people. There is such a thing as unction—I cannot tell you what it is, but I can tell you when I hear a sermon from a man who has it—and I can tell you when I hear a sermon that is without it. And I know that if it is God's Word,

there is a savor, an unction, a sweetness, a delightfulness about it that makes our very hearts leap and dance within us because of the blessed and glorious sound of the Gospel of God! Happy are the people that know this joyful sound!

But next, fire is only at work very moderately when it yields us comfort. It has also the effect of paining and awakening. You put your finger in the fire and you will know that it burns! You lay your hand upon a red-hot bar of iron and you will not need anybody to tell you that there is fire within it! So, even if you are an unconverted man—if you have, as yet, no knowledge of the power of the Gospel of God—yet if you come in contact with it, I will guarantee you that you will know it! Very likely you will show that you know it by getting very angry, growing very indignant. Men do not like being singed and scorched by the Gospel! When a fellow has burnt his hand, he does not feel pleased with the hot iron—and the Gospel often operates upon men most beneficially when it excites their wrath. I have not much hope of the sinner who keeps on hearing the Truth of God and saying, "Yes, I like that kind of preaching. I quite enjoy our minister's sermons." I have a great deal more hope of a man when he says, "I will never hear *that* fellow again, I cannot bear to listen to him," and goes out in a rage! He will come back before long—the hook is in his jaw—he is feeling the sharpness of it and he will not be able to get away from it.

The Word of the Lord is as a fire and if a man touches fire, it will burn him and he will be made to know that he has come into contact with it. Have you not, dear Friends, felt it to be so? If you have sat for years under a ministry and have remained not only unconverted, but unmoved—if you have always felt perfectly pleased and satisfied with yourself and with what you have heard—I should think it cannot have been the Gospel of Jesus Christ! If it has been the true Gospel of the Grace of God, I am sure that it will either make you angry with yourself, or angry with your sin, or angry with *itself*, for, if you do not hate your sin, you will hate the Gospel with all its lovingness! God's Word is so stern a witness against everything that is evil, that it is like fire, in that it pains, startles and awakens. Men cannot go to sleep when their fingers are on fire—neither can they when the true Gospel is sounding aloud in their ears!

Fire also has a melting power and so has the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, dear Friends, there are some of us who once had hearts of steel—nothing seemed able to move us and melt us but we came under the influence of the blessed Spirit of God and under the sound of the Gospel—and soon we began to feel, we began to tremble, we began to be in distress, we began to lament, we began to seek the Savior, we began to trust Him! All things were changed under the influence of this Divine fire. Oh, that we could get the hearts of many hardened ones into the very center of the blessed flame till the holy heat should make them flow like melted wax before the Presence of the God of Israel! Certainly the Gospel has a wonderful power to melt the heart of man.

More than that, the Gospel has a consuming power. When it first comes into a district, it finds people indifferent to it, but possibly it begins by burning up some one of their vices. It may be that drunks are reformed. Then, straightway, the men who get gain out of this evil mer-

chandise are sure to be indignant about it! They see the demon of drunkenness cast out of men and they cry, "Our gains are gone!" And they are angry, but they cannot stop the fire. Once fairly set alight, it will burn, blaze and spread till others shall cast away their evil habits and turn unto the living God!

I cannot help noticing in history the consuming power of the Gospel of Christ. There have been old systems of iniquity that have been hoary with age, but when, at last, they have been attacked by the Church of God with the sword of the Spirit and the Gospel of Christ, they have been utterly destroyed! There was, for instance, that abominable institution of slavery—and there was a part of the Church of Christ which tried to palliate it and spoke of it as "a Divine institution, a peculiar institution," and I know not what! But when the Church of God denounced slavery as a thing utterly inconsistent with Christianity, the thing was burnt up right speedily and passed away! There are many more social and political wrongs that will have to perish through the burning power of the Gospel—and there is much in our *hearts* and much in our *lives*, and much all round about us that will have to go as the Gospel fire burns more and more vigorously! But remember that it must be God's Word that will burn out the evil. We cannot do much with our poor thinking and tinkering—it is the eternal Truth of God, the everlasting verities brought to bear upon the sons of men that shall soon separate between the dross and the gold, consuming the one and leaving the other pure!

But our text also says that *God's Word is like a hammer*—"and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces." So that, whenever a minister has the Gospel to use, this simile should teach him how he ought to use it—with all his might, let him strike with it mighty blows for his Lord! I should think that it does not require any great education to learn how to use a hammer. I do not know, it may, but it seems that to use a hammer aright, one has nothing to do but to strike with it. A stone-breaker, for instance, gets a good strong hammer and a heap of stones to strike at—and he has but to hit them as hard as he can and to keep on hitting till all are broken. Brothers, when you preach, take the Gospel hammer and strike as hard as you can with it!

"Oh, but I must try to improve the look of my hammer! It must have a mahogany handle!" Never mind about the mahogany handle! Use your hammer for striking—hammers are not for ornament—they are meant to be used for real hard work! And when you come to use the Gospel as it ought to be used, the result is wonderful! It is a rock-breaking thing. "Oh," you cry, "there is a very obdurate man there!" Strike at him with the Gospel! "Oh, but he ridicules and scoffs at the Truth of God!" Never mind if he does—keep on smiting him with the Gospel. "Oh, but, in a certain district, I have wielded this hammer against the rock for years and nothing has come of it!" Still go on wielding it, for this is a hammer that never failed! Only continue to use it! Everything is not accomplished with one stroke, nor, perhaps, with 20 strokes. The rock that does not yield the first time, nor the second time, nor the third time, nor the 20th time, will yield at last! There is a process of disintegration taking place at every stroke—the great mass is inwardly moving even when you cannot see that it is doing so. And there will come, at last, one blow of the hammer

which will seem to do the deed. But all the previous strokes contributed to it and brought the rock into the right state for breaking it up at last. Hammer away, then, Brothers—hammer away with nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The heart that is struck may not yield even year after year, but it will yield at last!

I trust that I am speaking the truth about some of my hearers who have been listening to me for a long time. I have hammered at you with all my might—I do not see that I have done much, yet, but I *do* know that this hammer does not go to be beaten and, as long as you live, and I live, it will do the same work! In the name of the everlasting God, the Gospel shall still be brought to bear upon your heart and conscience! O God, grant that we may not be disappointed at the result of our labors, but may the hard hearts yield, after all, to the blows of the Gospel hammer!

If any of you are in the habit of hearing sermons which are very fine, very elegant, very logical, very proper, yet if they never strike you as the hammer strikes the rock—if they never aim at breaking your hearts—do not waste any more Sundays in hearing them, for they are not God's Word! This Word is a hammering Word and if the preacher's message does not strike you—if it does not ultimately break you in pieces—it is because it is not the Word of God to which you have been listening! This is the test which God, Himself, gives to distinguish the true from the false, "Is not My Word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

Now put the two together—*the fire and the hammer*—and you will see how God makes His servants who are to be instruments for His use. He puts us into the fire of the Word! He melts, He softens, He subdues! Then He takes us out of the fire and welds us with hammer strokes such as only He can give, till He has made us fit instruments for His use! And He goes forth to His sacred work of conquering the multitudes, having in His hands the polished shafts that He has forged with the fire and the hammer of His Word!

So far I have dealt with the statement of our text, that the Word of God has power in it like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

II. Now I want, in the second place, to ILLUSTRATE THIS STATEMENT by noticing certain parts of God's Word which have, to our personal knowledge, operated both as a fire and a hammer upon the hearts of men.

A large part of God's Word is taken up with the revelation of His Law and you cannot fully preach the Gospel if you do not proclaim the Law of the Lord. Men will never receive the balm of the Gospel unless they know something of the wounds that sin has made. If the Law of God is faithfully and fully preached, what a fire it is! What a hammer it is! That Law which takes cognizance of our words and our thoughts. That Law which we are constantly breaking by sins of omission and sins of commission. That Law which declares that God will by no means clear the guilty, that Law which must be followed by punishment upon those who disobey it—for the Lord our God is a jealous God and He will not have His Law trampled upon—that Law is both a fire and a hammer! When once the Spirit of God blesses the solemn declarations about the Law of God so as to

bring them home to the conscience, what a hammer it is! What a fire it is!

I shall never forget the time when I felt that fire so that I could not rest day or night and when I felt that hammer till I seemed broken in pieces with its tremendous blows! That Law which will justify no man till he keeps it perfectly. That Law which condemns every man who has violated it but once. That Law which demands death as the penalty for each offense. That Law which casts man into prison, out of which he can never come till he has paid the uttermost farthing—that Law is, indeed, a fire and a hammer and many have been burned and broken by it! Remember how John Bunyan felt its force for years? Many of us for briefer times have, nevertheless, realized that there is no teaching in the world that is so terrible as the proclamation of God's Law—nothing that so breaks the heart in pieces as a true revelation of the just demands of the Most High God.

But, beloved Brothers, have you not also felt that there is fire-work and hammer-work *in the teaching of the Gospel?* Oh, how often have we seen men who have not been moved, even by the Law of God, at last won to Christ by the preaching of the Gospel—the Gospel of Free Grace and dying love, full forgiveness for the greatest sinners—immediate, irreversible pardon given in a moment to every sinner who believes in Christ! Oh, how this Gospel has acted like a fire and burned up all the sinner's opposition! How this Gospel has also been like a hammer to break down human obstinacy! The Gospel of redemption through the precious blood of Jesus. The Gospel which tells of full Atonement made. The Gospel which proclaims that the utmost farthing of the ransom price has been paid and that, therefore, whoever believes in Jesus is free from the Law, free from guilt and free from Hell—the proclaiming of this Gospel has made men's hearts burn within them and has dashed out the very brains of sin and made men joyfully flee to Christ! So, preach the Gospel, then—the Gospel of justification by faith, the Gospel of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the Gospel of final perseverance through the unchanging love of God. Preach the whole of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God as it is revealed in the Covenant of Grace and you will be doing fire-and-hammer work of the very choicest sort!

Above all, Brothers, what fire-and-hammer power there is *in the doctrine of the Cross!* The ever-blessed Christ of God has the sins of all His people laid upon Him and He is fastened to the Cross of shame. He whom angels worshipped is hanged up as a felon! He bleeds and dies for guilty men. When every other piece of artillery has failed to break open the gates of the city of Mansoul, the battering ram of the Cross has made every timber start. Man must yield when the power of the Spirit of God applies to his heart the doctrine of the precious blood! The old, old story of the Cross has more power in it to melt the heart of man than all the other stories that were ever told! You must often have felt it to be so, you who are servants of God! Have you not often been melted and broken down by the story of the Cross? Yes, and you are not ashamed to be so broken down—rather do you strike upon your breasts with indignation that your hearts should be so hard to break—and your wish is that you may always be deeply sensitive to that sacred tragedy, that Divine story

of Him who was "found guilty of excess of love," but guilty of nothing beside. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, one might go on to illustrate the Truth of this statement, that everywhere God's Word has power as a hammer and as a fire, but especially those parts of it which speak of the Law, the Gospel and the Cross!

III. Time fails me, so I must close my discourse by asking you to PUT THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT TO A PRACTICAL TEST—"Is not My Word like as a fire, says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

Let us, first, *try it upon ourselves*. You are very sad, are you? Your heart is cold. Now, Brother, read a chapter from the Word. Open the Bible. Sit down and study it. Ask God to bless it to you and I am sure you will soon be delighted to find that it is like a fire to warm and comfort you. When you are sad, do not run into your neighbor's house, do not sit down, alone, and weep in sullen despair—get to the Word of the Lord! There is such sweetness in it, there is such power in it that in a short time you shall have beauty instead of ashes and songs instead of sighs.

You say that you are not sad, but you are very sleepy. You have become very drowsy and dull in the ways of God. You have not the earnest spirit you used to have, nor half the spiritual life and vigor you once felt. Very well, then come to God's Word—read it, study it, listen to it, find out where that Word is faithfully preached and go there! Oh, how quickly the Lord has blessed some of us in times of great barrenness! A single sentence has brought us out of our lethargy into holy energy. One chapter of that Word has operated upon us more swiftly than a charm. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Cling to the Gospel, whatever the state into which your heart gets—if you would again enjoy your first love, remember where you received it—it was in the hearing of the Word! Therefore, go and hear it, again, and search the Scriptures for yourself, that you may be revived and restored.

Perhaps another friend says, "I have lost so much of my comfort, assurance and joy, that I feel as if I had grown quite cold and hard and insensible." Why need you be cold when God's Word is like a fire? Why need your heart remain like a rock when God's Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Get back to the Gospel, dear Friend—that is the cure for your hardness and coldness! I saw, the other day, a man whom I used to know as a very energetic Christian. He went away from us and joined another church where the pastor is an eloquent man, and he has been there for years. I said to him, "Well, how are you getting on?" He answered, "Oh, I hardly know! I always like to hear the minister preach." "But how does your soul prosper?" I enquired. "Ah," he replied, "you have puzzled me, now, for ever since I have been there I have not dared to think whether I have a soul or not! The fact is, that kind of preaching does not do for people who have souls." "Oh, dear, me!" I said to him, "if I were you, I would flee from the place! If the preaching does not feed your soul and make you grow in love to God and in likeness to Christ, what is the good of it?" We must feel the power of the Word upon our hearts if we would be strong and active in service for our Lord! But it is according to the nature of God's Word that he who feeds thereon should be changed into its nature. As the Word of the Lord is quick and

powerful, if you feed on it, it shall make you live and it shall fill you with true power—it shall sanctify and purify you, and make you to reflect the Character of God.

And next, Brothers and Sisters—still using our text practically—as God's Word is like a fire and like a hammer, if we have used it upon ourselves, *let us try to use it upon others.* I have an opinion that there are a great many persons in this world whom we give up as hopeless, who have never really been tried and tested with the Gospel in all their lives. I am afraid that there are in this place persons of whom we speak as unlikely to be converted, who have never been fully brought under the influence of the fire of God's Word, or beneath the fall of the hammer of the Gospel. "I brought one person," says somebody. I am glad you have, my dear Friend, but have you ever spoken faithfully to that person about his soul? "Well, I do not know that I have. I have said a *little* to him." Have you ever plainly put the Gospel before him? "Well, I do not think he was quite the person to be spoken to in that fashion." Ah, I see that you thought you were going to burn him without using fire and to break that rock without lifting the hammer! The fact is, you believed that something better than the Gospel fire was needed in his case, or that something gentler than the Gospel hammer was needed. Will you not try that old-fashioned hammer upon him? Will you not try that old fire upon him?

I have heard of congregations where men have said, "There is no good to be done there." And I have wondered if they were to try preaching one of the old-fashioned sort of Gospel sermons—if they could get Mr. Whitefield to preach, or have someone to preach the same truth as Whitefield preached—what results would follow? When people say that the hearts of the people are not affected by the preaching in any place, I ask, "But was it the *Gospel* with which you tried to affect them? Was it the very Word of God that was preached?" *Our* words are like paper pellets thrown against the wall—they effect nothing! But God's Word is like a shot fired from one of the greatest Woolwich cannons! When it comes, it crashes through every obstacle and destroys everything that is opposed to it.

Why should we not always set the whole Truth of God before those whom we seek to save? I believe that sometimes, even in Sunday schools, children are taught "to love gentle Jesus," and so on, as if *that* were the way of salvation. Why not tell them to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ? Why is love to take the place of *faith*? Let it be the same Gospel for the children that you give to the adults! Try them with the same Gospel and see what will come of it—and let this work be attempted everywhere.

"But," says someone, "there are certain districts where you cannot do any good if you try to preach the Gospel. You must fiddle to the people and drum to them—and then you must have amusements and entertainments for them, you must have penny readings and concerts." Very well, convert sinners that way if you can, dear Friends—I do not object to any method that results in the winning of souls! Stand on your head if that will save the people, but still, it seems to me that if God's Word is like a fire, there is *nothing* like it for burning its way! And if God's Word is like a hammer, there can be *nothing* like that Word for hammering down everything that stands in the way of Jesus Christ! Why, then, should we not continually try the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel?

"Well," says one, "but the poor people are dirty—we must have various sanitary improvements." Of course we must! Go on with them as fast as you can—the more of such things, the better! There is nothing like soapsuds and whitewash for dirty people and dirty places, but you may whitewash and soap them as long as you like, yet *that* will not save their souls without the Gospel of Christ! You may go to them and plead the cause of temperance with them and I hope you will—the more of it, the better. Make teetotalers of every one of them if you can, for it will be a great blessing to them! But still, you have not really done anything permanent if you stop there. Try the Gospel! Try the Gospel! Try the Gospel! When the Gospel was tried against the world in the days of Paul—when the power of the great empire of Rome had crushed out liberty and when lust of the most abominable kind made the world reek in the nostrils of God—nothing was done but preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified! And the common people heard of Jesus Christ, heard of Him gladly, and believed in Him! And very soon, down went the false gods, down went the brutal lusts of the Roman empire and a great part of the world was permeated with the Gospel! And it *needs* to be done again and it *must* be done again! But remember that it is only to be done by that same Word of the Lord which did it the first time. And the sooner we get back to that Word, the better. And the more we throw away everything else but the simple proclaiming of that Word, the more speedy will be the victory and the more swift and sure will be the triumph for our God and for His Christ!

O Sirs, if you want to have your hearts renewed, it is the Gospel that must melt them! If you want to be saved, it is the Gospel that must save you! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." This is the substance of the Revelation from Heaven—accept it and God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 23:1-32.

Verse 1. *Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! says the LORD.* What a dreadful woe this is upon all false shepherds—those who profess to be sent of God to instruct the people, but who are not sent of God at all, whose labors only result in the scattering of the sheep and destroying them instead of gathering them to Christ for their salvation!

2-4. *Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed My people: You have scattered my flock, and driven them away, also have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, says the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them who shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the LORD.* If the undershepherds do not feed the flock, God, Himself, will do it, for His own redeemed flock shall not be torn of wolves, nor left to perish in the lands where they are driven. That Great Shepherd of the sheep will do what others fail to do, but this does not take away from them their responsibil-

ity and it must be the most solemn responsibility that rests on mortal man to profess to be a shepherd of souls, yet not to be sent of God.

6. *Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.* We are looking for that glorious King! Oh, that He would soon come! He is the great Monarch who shall absorb all other monarchies, for, "He shall reign forever and ever."

6. *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* What a glorious name for our King who is made of God unto us "righteousness." We may well rejoice to think that all the perfect righteousness of our great King and Lord shall belong to us, for this shall be His very name, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

7, 8. *Therefore, behold, the days come, says the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD lives, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, the LORD lives which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries where I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.* There are better times for Israel than Israel has ever known as yet! The glories of Egypt and of the Red Sea are yet to be eclipsed. And there are better times in store for the Church of God than she has seen as yet!

9. *My heart within me is broken because of the prophets.* In Jeremiah's day there was a set of men who pretended to be prophets, yet who contradicted the Lord's servant at every point.

9. *All my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of His holiness.* Jeremiah had really received the Word of the Lord and it seemed to overpower him—as that Word was full of terror, he felt like one who was overcome with wine.

10, 11. *For the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourns; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house have I found their wickedness, says the LORD.* It is an awful thing when wickedness abounds even in the House of God and it is to be feared that, in many places, the Church of the present day is not clear in this matter.

12. *Therefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness.* What an awful description of the doom of the profane prophets and priests! Slippery ways are bad enough in the light, but, "their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness."

12-14. *They shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, says the LORD. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused My people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing.* It was bad enough for Samaria to go astray. There was a mixed race there, so it was no wonder that their prophets were foolish, but oh, that in Jerusalem, the city of the great King, there should be false prophets—that was worst of all! This was the style of these prophets—

14, 15. *They commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none returns from his wickedness: they are all of them unto Me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.* When preachers are bad, who wonders that people are worse? If the prophets go astray, how shall those who follow them find the right road?

16. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain.* That is one mark of a false Prophet—he makes you feel that you are a fine fellow, that there is something good in you—"They make you vain."

16. *They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.* That is another of the marks of a false Prophet. Such a man as that is a great thinker—he has thought out his theology, himself, he has imagined and invented it, himself—"They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord."

17. *They still say unto them that despise Me, The LORD has said you shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.* This is yet another mark of the false Prophet. He always tries to smooth down the consequences of sin. "In the future state," he says, "sin may occasion some temporary inconvenience, but all things will come right, sooner or later." That is a man sent of the devil! He is no servant of the living God! By these three tests you may prove who are the false prophets—they make you vain, they speak out of their own heart, not out of the mouth of God, and they try to make it easy for you to sin by denying the greatness of the penalty attached to it.

18, 19. *For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, and has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word, and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.* This is God's Word—He does not prophesy smooth things to the wicked! He does not promise slight consequences of sin, but "a whirlwind" and, "a grievous whirlwind."

20-22. *The anger of the LORD shall not return, until He has executed, and till He has performed the thoughts of His heart: in the latter days you shall consider it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.* False prophets are futile and vain—no good result comes of all their teaching. But oh, if they had known the Word of the Lord! If they had really been sent of God, what a difference there would have been! God grant that none of us may pretend to teach others what we have never learned, or to speak for God if God has never spoken to us!

23-26. *Am I a God at hand, says the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the LORD. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? says the LORD. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in My name, saying, I have dreamed,*

I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? Yes, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart. They profess to be prophets of their own heart, but "they are prophets of the *deceit* of their own heart," for that which comes out of man's heart is like the heart, itself, and man's heart "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

27, 28. *Which think to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten My name for Baal. The Prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream.* Let him tell it as a dream, for it is nothing more than that! If he has dreamt it, let him say, "This is a dream that I have dreamed, but it is only a dream."

28. *And he that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully.* Let him speak it as the Word of the Lord.

28. *What is the chaff to the wheat? says the LORD.* Man's thoughts, man's conceptions, at their very best, are but as chaff—only the Word of the Lord is the true wheat.

29, 30. *Is not My Word like as a fire? says the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, that steal My Words every one from his neighbor.* Borrowed sermons—pages of other people's experience—fragments pulled from old or new divines—nothing of their own, nothing that God ever said to them, nothing that ever thrilled their hearts or swayed their souls—God will not acknowledge such teaching as this!

31. *Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He says.* They have not any hearts—they only use their tongues. They say, "He says," as if God had said to them something which He has never said.

32. *Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, says the Lord, and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the LORD.* See how heavily God deals with the false prophets of Jeremiah's time? He will deal with equal severity with any who preach or teach anything other than the Gospel of His blessed Son—the pure Revelation which is written in this Book! God grant that none of us may be deceived by them, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 484, 447.

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

REJOICING AND REMEMBERING
NO. 2461

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 19, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 4, 1886.

"We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine."
Song of Solomon 1:4.

IT is a very blessed habit of saints who have grown in Grace to enter into actual conversation with the Well-Beloved. Our text is not so much speaking of Him as speaking *to* Him—"We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine." Of course, in prayer and in praise, we speak to God, but I suggest that we should seek to have much more of intense and familiar conversations with the Lord Jesus Christ than the most of us at present enjoy. I find it good, sometimes in prayer, to say nothing, but to sit or kneel quite still and to look up to my Lord in adoring silence—and then sometimes to talk to Him, not asking anything of Him, but just speaking familiarly with Jesus, realizing Him to be present, and waiting to hear Him speak until some precious Word of His from Scripture comes into my soul as with living accents newly-spoken by those dear lips which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh! The French have a word which they use concerning that conversation which is common among those who love one another, or are on terms of intimate friendship. They call it, "*tutoyage,*" for they say, "you" and, "your," to one another, instead of the more formal language used towards strangers. I like that form of expression that is used in our text and delight to meet with souls that are brought into so rapt a state of fellowship with Christ that they can speak to Him in this familiar fashion, "We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine."

If you, dear Friends, have not lately conversed with Jesus, do so now in the quietude of your own spirit. Think that His shadow is over you—do not let it be mere imagination, but let it be what is far better than that—a true realizing faith—for if He is present where two or three are met together in His name, rest assured that He is not absent where this great assembly of His people has come together to commemorate His passion and His death! You are here, blessed Master—we are sure that You are and we worship You and speak with You as really as if we could see You with that vesture on, woven from the top throughout—as truly as if we saw You, now, lifting that beloved pierced hand and laying it upon us! And we say to You from the bottom of our hearts, "We will rejoice and be glad in You, we will remember Your love more than wine." This text is not

so much for me to explain, dear Friends, as for you to enjoy! Forget all about the preacher, but take the text and part it among yourselves—extract as much as you can of its spiritual nourishment and feed upon it!

I. *As you do so, you will notice, first, that we have, here,* A DOUBLE RESOLVE—*"We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine."*

I may say of that resolve that it is, first, *a necessary resolve*, for it is not according to human nature to rejoice in Christ. It is not according to the tendency of our poor fallen state to remember His love. There must be an act of the will with regard to this resolve—let us will it now—"We *will* be glad and rejoice in You, we *will* remember Your love more than wine." There are so many things that try to come in between our souls and our Savior, so many sorrows that would prevent our rejoicing in Him, that we must be resolved to be glad in Him whatever our sorrows may be. Down with you, sorrows! Down with you! We have said unto the Lord that we will be glad and rejoice in Him and we mean to prove our words to be true! Then there are so many troublous thoughts that come flying in to mar our full fellowship with our Lord. However tightly windows may be closed and doors may be shut, these thoughts will find an entrance and we get to remembering the sick child at home, or some care that has afflicted us during the week. Oh, but, Lord, we will not remember these things, now! We say to You from our hearts, "We *will*—we *will*—we *will* remember Your love!" Away with you, care, sorrow, grief—away with you! Come to me, O Holy Spirit, and help me, now, to have a happy time, to be glad and rejoice in my Lord—and to have a holy time—to remember His love and to remember nothing else!

You must will it most intensely, dear Friends, or it will not come to pass. It is not sufficient to merely walk into a place of worship and put ourselves into the posture of devotion—and then to imagine that, doing whatever is proper to the place and the hour—we shall have fellowship with Jesus. Oh, no, Beloved! Oh, no! We must worship Him in spirit and in truth, not in fiction and in sham—not mechanically, as though we could have true fellowship with Him without earnest and intense desire. No, there must be these two utterances of our holy resolve, "We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine."

And truly, dear Friends, as this resolve is necessary, it is also *a right and proper resolve*. Should we not be glad and rejoice in Christ?—

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?"

Why should the children of the bride-chamber fast while the Bridegroom is with them? With such a Husband as we have in Christ, should not the spouse rejoice in Him? Would it be becoming for a heart that is married to Christ to be in any other condition than that of rejoicing in Him? I know you have many things in which you cannot rejoice. Well, let them go. But you can rejoice in Him—in His Person, in His work, in His offices, in His relationships, in His power, in His Glory, in His First Advent, in His Second Advent1 Surely, these are not things that can be thought of without delightful emotion! It is most proper that we should be glad and

rejoice in our Lord. There ought to be a reduplication of our joy—we should joy in Him and then rejoice in Him—we should "be glad and rejoice" in Him.

It is most proper that we should be glad in the Lord and what can be more proper than that we should remember Him? What a shame it is that we ever forget Him! His name should be so deeply engraved on our hearts that we cannot forget Him. Let us remember His love, for, surely if there is *anything* that we ought to remember, it is that undying love which is our choicest portion on earth and which will be the main constituent of our highest bliss in Heaven! Then, by the help of God's Spirit, let us make this resolve at this moment. Whatever we may do when we get out of this building, at any rate for the next half-hour let us resolve to stand to this double declaration, "We will rejoice, and we will remember."

Do you not think, also, that this resolution, if we carry it out, will be *very helpful to ourselves?* What a help it is to a Christian to be glad in the Lord! I know what it is to be depressed. I do not suppose there is any person in this place who knows what it is to be cast down so low as I sometimes am. Then I feel that there is no help for me and no hope of my living and working unless I can get out of that sad condition and get to be glad in the Lord. And I cry, "My Heart, my Heart, what are you doing? 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." There is no way of getting right out of the Stygian bog of the Slough of Despond like rejoicing in the Lord! If you try to rejoice in *yourself*, you will have a poor reason for joy. But if you rejoice and are glad in the Lord, you have the real, abiding, unchanging source of joy, for he who rejoices in Christ rejoices in Him who is "the same yesterday, today and forever." And he may always rejoice in Him! Come, then, and for your own good hang up the sackbut and take down the psaltery—put away the ashes! What if men call this season, "Lent"? We will keep no Lent, tonight—this is our Eastertide! Our Lord has risen from the dead and He is among us, and we will rejoice in Him! Come, Beloved, surely it is time that we did, for a while, at least, forget our pain, griefs and all the worries of this weary world and, for one, I must, I will, be glad and rejoice in my Lord—and I hope many of you will join with me in the happy occupation which will be helpful to yourselves.

Certainly, it will also be *for the good of others*. I think that Believers do much harm if they allow their depressions of spirit to be too conspicuous. There is another meaning besides the first one to that text, "You, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face that you appear not unto men to fast." But if you can get right out of your sorrow and can actually rejoice in the Lord. And if you can so remember Him as to be glad and rejoice in Him, you will allure many to the fair ways of Christ which otherwise will be evilly spoken of if you go mourning all your days! Come, you weak ones, come and feast on bread that can make you strong! Come, you, whose eyes are red with weeping, take a handkerchief that shall dry your tears and make your eyes as bright as diamonds!

Remember Christ and be glad and rejoice in Him! Angels around the Throne of God can have no higher joy than this! And they cannot enter so fully into it as you can, for He has not loved them as He has loved you!—

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming Grace and dying love."

This, then, is what I earnestly commend to you, this double resolve, that we should all truly say to our Lord, "We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine." But, dear Friends, *we cannot carry out the resolve without the help of the Holy Spirit.* Therefore, let us breathe it unto the Lord in prayer and, as we tell Him what we mean to do, let us, each one, add, "Draw me, O Lord. Then I will run after You. Help me to come to You! Manifest Yourself to me and then I will be glad and rejoice in You."

II. Now I want to go a step further and say that I think the resolve of the text is A SUITABLE RESOLVE FOR THIS OCCASION—"We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine."

We are, most of us, coming to the Communion Table to eat of the bread and to drink of the cup in remembrance of our Master's dying love. Surely now is the hour, if ever in our lives, to be glad and rejoice in Him and to remember Him, for the object of this supper is *to commemorate His dying love*! It is idle and worse than idle, to come to Christ's Table if you do not *remember* Him—what good can it do you? The use that it is to the spectator is that you show Christ's death "till He comes." But if there is not in the spectator any thought of that death, of what use is the sight of the Table with its sacred vessels? And if you, yourself, do not think of Christ, of what use to you are the emblems of a forgotten or an unknown Lord? No, we are to commemorate His death—so let us, in our hearts, rejoice in Him and remember Him! Well did we sing just now—

"Jesus, when faith with fixed eyes,
Beholds Your wondrous Sacrifice,
Love rises to an ardent flame,
And we, all other hope disclaim!
Hence, O my Soul, a balsam flows
To heal your wounds, and cure your woes.
Immortal joys come streaming down,
Joys like His griefs, immense, unknown."

Remember, next, that in coming to this Communion Table we also *commemorate the results of Christ's death.* One result of our Lord's death is that He gives food to His people. His broken body has become bread for our souls, yes, it is meat, indeed. His blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins, has become drink, indeed. By His death, Christ has given us life and by the completion of His great redeeming work, and by His ever-living intercession, He has given us bread and wine by which that life may be sustained. He has finished it all and He has gone into Glory to secure the results of His finished work. Sitting around His Table, we are reminded of all this—the bread is ready, the cup is filled. We have nothing to do to prepare the feast. All we have to do, now, is to come and partake of it and feed to the fullest upon heavenly food. So, dear Friends,

if we come to this Table in a right spirit, we must rejoice in our Lord and we must remember His love.

I think, also, that there is this further reason why we should rejoice in our Lord and remember His love, because at this Table *the commemoration is made by our Lord to be a feast*. They miss the meaning of the Lord's Supper who kneel around what they call an, "altar." The very point of the Supper is that it should be taken while *sitting* around a table. It is not meant to be an adoration—it is a communion! We come here that we may have fellowship with Him who sat at the table with His disciples and made them to be His companions at His last supper. Joy is becoming at a royal feast! What? Will you come to the King's Table with a sorrowful countenances? Will you come sadly to see what He has brought you? Now that He has prepared the bread and wine as a feast for your souls, will you come here hanging your heads like bulrushes? No, but let this be your resolution, "We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine."

Do kings make feasts? Do they lift high the flowing bowl? Are there shouts of joy and exultation at their banquets and shall it be that this world's poor vine, whose juice is often to men like the wine of Gomorrah, shall bring even the semblance of joy superior to ours when we drink of the wine that comes from the Vine of God and the clusters that Christ has trod in the winepress? No! Higher, far, is *your* joy than ever came to them that have made merry at earthly feasts! More delightful, more intense, more real, more true be your hallowed ecstasies than anything that wine or wealth can ever bring! "We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine." O God, help us to carry out this resolution! It seems to me to be specially right, proper and fit, when we come to this high festival of the Church of God, that we should rejoice in the Lord and remember His love!

Let us also recollect that when we come to the Table of our Lord, *we commemorate a very happy union*. Our text speaks in the plural—"*We* will be glad and rejoice in You, *we* will remember Your love more than wine." I do not know how you feel, Brothers and Sisters, but I should not like to go to Heaven alone. If nobody else will go on pilgrimage, Christian must set out by himself and march along towards the Celestial City until he finds a suitable fellow-pilgrim. But I like best to go with Christiana, Mercy and the children—and as the company together. Though I should enjoy fellowship with my Lord if I were His only loved one, yet it greatly increases my joy as I look at the faces of many of you whom I have known a score of years and with whom I have lived in such happy union year after year! Many of you who were once "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," have been plucked, like brands out of the burning, through the preaching of the Gospel in this pulpit—and it seems such a happy thing for us to be communing together around the Table of our Lord.

Some of you, my dear venerable Brothers and Sisters, will soon be Home—come, we will be glad and rejoice in our Lord, will we not? Before

you go away from us, join us in another holy song! Give us another of your patient, quiet, happy, restful looks! One dear Sister went Home this morning, at twelve o'clock, while we were worshipping here. I am sure that her spirit is now rejoicing before the Throne of God and some of you will be going soon—but until you go, we will rejoice and be glad together, will we not? We will still take the cup of blessing at the Lord's Table, whatever our infirmities and sorrows may be. And we will remember Him until we drink the new wine in our Father's Kingdom above! And you men and women in the very midst of the battle of life, with all your trials and struggles, we will stand shoulder to shoulder, will we not? We are one in Christ and there is between us a bond of union that never can be snapped! It binds us for time and for eternity. We came to this Communion Table to eat and to drink, not each one for himself, only, but each one in fellowship with all the rest—and this ought to make us glad. If I am not glad about myself, I will be glad to think that *you* are glad! If I have a heavy burden to carry, I will be glad that you have not. And if you have a burden and I have not, try to be glad that I have not one, or, if you have one, and I have another, let us rejoice that we both have the same God to help us to carry them and let us believe that as our days, so shall our strength be!

What a joy it adds to this festival when we see the young folk coming among us, the sons and daughters of God's people being brought into the Church! Do you not notice how dear Mr. William Olney, whenever he prays for a blessing upon our ministry, always breaks out into thanksgiving to God that all his family have been brought to Christ? There are many others of us who can praise the Lord for the same favor and it is a great joy to us! Yes, Lord, we will remember Your love—husband and wife, sons and daughters, and some of us can say grandchildren, too—we will all come clustering around Your Table and, together, we will remember Your sweet love to our fathers, to ourselves and to our children! We cannot help remembering it and rejoicing and being glad in it.

I must give you just one more thought upon this point. It does not become us to gather at this Communion Table with a heavy heart when we remember that *it is not only a commemoration, but an anticipation.* We are to do this "till He comes." Did I not try, this morning, [Sermon No. 1894, Volume 32—*"The Two Appearings and the Discipline of Grace"*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] to sound the trumpet of His coming? It would not have startled me if He had come while we were assembled and I was speaking of "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Nor should it startle any of you, if, in the dead of this very night, while you are in your beds, you should hear the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" for He may come at any moment and He will come, "in such an hour as you think not." Let us leap up at the remembrance of this gladsome hope!

We are coming to the Table, keeping up the memorial of our Lord's first appearing in the fond hope and sure belief of that second appearing when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their

Father. Therefore, let us keep the feast with high hope. With joyous notes, sound aloud the silver trumpet of the great jubilee and, as you come to the Table, let your hearts be glad in the Lord, whose love you especially remember at this hallowed festival!

III. I will close in a very few minutes, but I must dwell for a brief space upon what I meant to make my third point concerning this double resolve—LET US CARRY IT OUT. That ought always to be the practical conclusion to every sermon—let us carry it out! We have said to our Lord in the language of the text, "We will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine." Very well, now let us carry out this resolve.

"We will remember Your love." Dear Savior, what we have to remember is Your *love*—Your love in old eternity, before the earth was, Your prescient love, which—

"Saw us ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all."

We remember the love of Your espousals when You did espouse Your people unto Yourself and did resolve that, whatever might be the lot of Your elect, You would share it with them. The Lord Jesus made up His mind that He would be one with His Church—for this purpose He left His Father that He might be one with His bride. I shall get into great deeps if I go much further in speaking about Christ's love.

"We will remember Your love"—that love which, having once begun, has never wavered, never diminished, never stopped—

"Love, so vast that nothing can bound!
Love, too deep for thought to sound!
Love, which made the Lord of All
Drink the wormwood and the gall!
Love, which led Him to the Cross,
Bearing there unuttered loss!
Love, which brought Him to the gloom
Of the cold and darksome tomb!
Love, which will not let Him rest
Till His chosen all are blest!
Till they all for whom He died
Live rejoicing by His side!"

We remember the love which Jesus bore in His heart right up into Glory at the right hand of the Father—that love which is still as great as when He hung on Calvary to redeem us unto Himself. The wonderful part of all this to me is that it should be the love of such an One as Christ is. That ever so Divine a Person should set His love on us is very wonderful. I can understand my mother's love. I can understand my child's love. I can understand my wife's love, but I cannot understand Christ's love. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we are nothings, we are nobodies! Yet this glorious Everybody, this All in All, did actually set His love upon us! Suppose that all the holy angels had loved us and that all God's redeemed had loved us? All put together, it would be only so many grains of dust that would not turn the scale! But Christ's love is a mountain, no, more

than all the mountains in the universe! I know of nothing to be compared with it.

That is the first way in which we are to carry out this double resolve—we are to remember and to rejoice in Christ's love.

Next, let each one of us say to Christ, "I will remember Your love *to me*." Brothers and Sisters, I can believe in Christ's loving you, but there are times when it seems a great mystery that He should ever have loved *me*. I can truly say that, often, I have felt that if I might sit at the feet of the poorest, meanest, least of God's servants and serve them, I would count it a Heaven to do it if I did but feel sure of Christ's love to my own soul. I see so many beauties in my Brothers and my Sisters that I can admire the Grace of God in them, but, often, I see and feel so many imperfections in myself that I can only wonder that Christ should ever have loved me. I suppose that each of you feels the same. I am sure that you do if you are in a right state of heart, for, truth to tell, there is no beauty in any of us that He should desire us—and there is no excellence in any of us that could have made it worth His while to die for us. "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"—and died for us as ungodly. Come, then, will you not be glad and rejoice that Christ should ever have loved you? Will you not be glad and rejoice, and yet wonder all the while, that it should ever have been possible for Him to draw you "with cords of a man, with bands of love," and bring you into living, loving, everlasting union with Himself?

Still, even *that* is not all! The text does not merely speak about Christ's love, and Christ's love to me, but it talks about *Christ Himself*. "We will be glad and rejoice in You"—not only in His love, but in Himself! Do try, dear Friends, to let your thoughts dwell upon Christ, His complex Person, God and Man, and all the wonders which lie wrapped up in Emmanuel, God With Us! Your work, Lord, is fair, but the hand that worked the work is still fairer. All Your designs of love are full of splendor, but what shall we say of the mind that first gave creation to those designs? The glance, the look of love which You have given me is blessed, but oh, those eyes of Yours, those eyes which are brighter than the stars of the morning! The Lord Jesus is better than everything that comes from Him! His gifts are infinitely precious—then what must He, Himself, be? Come, then, Beloved, and let us be glad and rejoice in Him, and let us remember His love more than wine!

The text says, "we will remember," but some of you cannot remember because you do not know. A man cannot remember what he has never heard of, or seen, or known. But, Brothers and Sisters, *let us remember what we do know of Christ's love*. I remember the first day I ever tasted of His love consciously to myself. Ah, but I look back and think of the rivers of love that came steaming down to me when I did not even know that I was receiving them! And I remember that many days have passed since first I could give back the glance of love in return for His love to me. But oh, what His love to me since then has been! His love in sickness, in sor-

row, in labor, in backsliding, in prayer, in tears, in unbelief, in faith, in varying and changing as many as the changes of the moon! Yet, His love has always been the same. What a book some of you could write concerning Christ's love to you if you had but a nimble pen! What a story some of you could tell of Christ's love if some guest could be detained while you told the wondrous story!

I sometimes think within myself that if all the interesting things that are written in all the works of fiction could be put together, I could surpass them all in the literal simple facts of a common life like mine—and I believe that many of God's people here could say the same! A Christian's life is full of interest. Last Thursday night I called the life of a Christian a cluster of Kohinoors threaded on a string of Divine faithfulness and I am sure that it is so!—

"Wonders of Grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song."

Repeat His mercies as you remember them and be glad and rejoice in Him even more than in the mercies that come from Him!

In conclusion, I would say that I think the people of God, in gathering to the Communion Table, should try to *be glad and rejoice in their Lord, and in nobody else—and to remember Him—and nothing else*. Let all be a blank except what Christ has written on your memory! Let all be a blank except where that dear face appears—

"The head that once was crowned with thorns,"

but—

"Is crowned with Glory now."

Think only of Him! Put the glass to your eye and shut out all the rest of the landscape—let that glass take nothing within its circle but just the face of the Well-Beloved which we soon hope to see without a cloud between!

God bless you, dear Friends! I wish that all of you understood this Truth of God of which I have been speaking. Some of you do not—may the Lord lead you to do so, for there is no life like that which is spent at Jesus' feet, and no joy like that which comes from our dear Lord! I wish you knew it. Believe on Him and you shall know it, and shall know it at once. Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—797, 804, 819.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 22.

This Psalm is a sort of window through which we can look into the heart of our crucified Savior. We see all the external part of the Crucifixion through the four windows of the Gospels, but this 22nd Psalm brings us into the King's innermost chamber and here we perceive the secret sufferings of His soul. You can very well conceive of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was on the Cross, beginning to speak in the language of the first verse of this Psalm and closing with the last words of the Psalm—"He has done this," which might properly be interpreted, "It is

finished." I have often read this Psalm with you, especially on the evenings of our great Communion services. If we are spared, we will read it together many more times. It is a very wonderful Psalm—the Lord give us to understand it as we read it!!

Verse 1. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?* That was the very climax of our Lord's grief upon the Cross, that it was necessary that the Father, Himself, should forsake Him. The penalty of sin is that God must leave the man who has sin upon him even by imputation—and God left this wondrous Man, this perfect Man, in whom was no sin, but upon whom the sin of His people had been laid. He, "His own Self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree" and, therefore, the Father must forsake Him. But it was a bitter experience for our Savior that even His prayers should not be heard when they had become so hoarse as to resemble, rather, the roaring of a wounded beast than the articulate utterance of a man—"Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?"

2, 3. *O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel.* Notice that the Lord Jesus, in His greatest agony, does not impugn the justice of His Father's treatment. In His bitterest sufferings He still adores the holiness of God—"You are holy." It was because God was holy that His Son must suffer so—in order to save the unholy.

4-6. *Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man*—There is a little red worm which seems to be nothing but a mass of blood—and the Savior compares Himself in His agony to that tiny creature—"I am a worm, and no man"—

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 vinegar and gall that mockery poured into the Savior's wounded heart! How these cruel words must have stung His sensitive spirit! It was necessary that God should leave Him while He was bearing His people's sin, but how shameful it was that evil men should turn that stern necessity into a ground of accusation against Him! Yet they did—they taunted Him with it—"He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him."

9, 10. *But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breast. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother's belly.* Our Savior remembers His own marvelous birth which differed from ours in some respects—and He thinks of how the Father took care of Him, then. Did He not preserve Him when Joseph and Mary fled into Egypt from the wrath of Herod? Was there not a singular power that controlled the movements of the Wise Men and warned them to return to their own country another way,

so that the Infant Christ should not be discovered and destroyed? Jesus on the Cross remembers that remarkable preservation! And I suggest to you who are getting old that you may draw comfort from the fact that when you were infants and could not help yourselves, the Lord took care of you. And if you come to a second childhood—if you should live to be as helpless as when you were infants—the God who watched over you in the beginning will watch over you to the end! Remember how He has said, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

11. *Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.* Peter, James, John and all the disciples had fled. "There is none to help." The women could weep with pitying eyes and sympathetic hearts, but they could not help. "There is none to help."

12. *Many bulls have compassed Me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round.* There stood the chief priests and the rulers, and the Roman soldiers with their massive bulk and brute strength.

13. *They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.* There was nothing but cruelty and spite and fury all round the tender heart of that lonely Sufferer. Ah, me, was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow?

14. *I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint.* This was caused by the rough dashing of the Cross into the ground when they lifted it up and plunged it into its place.

14. *My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels.* It was a living death, a deadly life. Christ's very heart, which is the center of life, had become dissolved by pain and weakness and sorrow.

15. *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.* The terrible death-thirst was upon Him through the fever generated by His wounds.

16. *For dogs have compassed Me: this assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet.* The common multitude, with ribald jest and hateful mockery, stood there taunting Him. He was encircled by them—like a poor hunted stag surrounded by the hounds.

17. *I may count all My bones: they look and stare upon Me.* They stood mocking at His nakedness, jesting at His emaciated form.

18-19. *They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture. But be You not far from Me, O LORD.* That is still the very center of our Savior's suffering, so He turns His pleading in that direction. He does not ask that the dogs may be called off, nor that the bulls may be driven away—His cry is, "Be not You far from Me, O Lord."

19-21. *O My Strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth: for You have heard Me from the horns of the unicorns.* He remembers former days wherein God had helped Him, and He prays that the Lord will help Him still, and bring Him safely through this terrible trial, as, indeed, He did! Now the tone of the Psalm changes. A gleam of sunlight plays across the scene. The agony is over, the life is poured out,

and now the Savior begins to contemplate the result of His suffering. Think, dear Brothers and Sisters, how the Lord thought of You! He says—

22. *I will declare Your name unto My brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I praise You.* The risen Christ is in the midst of us! He has come here to tell us of His Father's love. He has told it to us by His death and now He bids us praise the Lord and He, Himself, leads our song! This is the reward of His passion, that He and His brethren should bless and praise the Lord forever and ever!

23, 24. *He that fears 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.* Is not this delightful? Your Lord has gone through the black darkness and has come out into the Light of God—and when your turn comes to go through the darkness, you, too, shall come out into the Light even as He did! Therefore, rejoice in His name! If the Head has conquered, the members shall conquer, too. You shall all share in your Savior's joy as you are partakers of His sufferings.

25, 26. *My praise shall be of You in the great congregation: I will pay My vows before them that fear Him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied.* He thought of *you*, poor, timid, trembling ones! You who are humbled before God under a sense of your sin. Because He died, because He accomplished your redemption, you "shall eat and be satisfied."

26, 27. *They shall praise the LORD that seek Him: Your heart shall live forever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You.* See what solace Christ derives from the spread of the faith, the conquest of the world by His death!

28-30. *For the Kingdom is the LORD'S: and He is the governor among the nations. All they that are fat 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 seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.* This is in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy—"When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed."

31. *They shall come*—The passion of Christ shall work for a certain deliverance for His people. What He has purchased, He shall surely have—"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." When our Lord had uttered these words, "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."

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

THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN
NO. 2462

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 26, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1886.

"For who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?"
Ecclesiastes 6:12.

MAN at his very best is only a man and well might David ask, "What is man?" In part, he is but red earth, as Adam was when he came fresh from his Maker's hands. Solomon tells us, in the 10th verse of this chapter, "That which has been is named already, and it is known that it is man." Whoever has lived and however wise and good and great he may have been, he has only been a man. Sum him up, add all together—the beauties of his body, the skill of his mind, even the virtues of his spirit—and what is he, even then, but a man? And man is but vapor which appears for a little while and then vanishes away! He is as thin and airy and unsubstantial as his own breath! He comes and he goes—he is here such a little while that he can scarcely be said to be, for he does but begin to be before he closes his being so far as this world is concerned.

As man is as light as vanity, itself, Solomon urges that it is idle and vain for him to attempt to contend with God. He puts it thus in the 10th verse, "Neither may he contend with Him who is mightier than he." It is always unwise to contend with one who is mightier than yourself, but when the disparity is so great as between man and *God*—the creature of an hour and the self-existent Creator, the poor feeble worm called man and the almighty invincible God—you see at once what folly it is, even, to *think* of battling with Him. He is, indeed, foolish who would contend with his Maker! Shall the potsherd strive to break the rod of iron? Or shall the wax war against the fire? There is no hope for us in such contention, yet how frequently do we—even we who are His children—begin to contend with our God! If He chastens us, if He takes away our comforts, if He permits us to be disappointed in our aspirations, straightway we begin to enquire, "Why is this?" And I have known times when that question has been carried very, very far—when some whom we have esteemed have seemed to pick a quarrel with God and they would not forgive Him. Their dear one was taken away and they called God cruel. If they did not *say* as much, they thought it. And they have kept the anniversary of that bereavement, year after year, still unforgiving towards their God. That kind of rebellious spirit creates 10 times more pain than the affliction, itself, did! Then the rod falls more heavily than it otherwise would have done

and the soul, dashing itself against the pricks, wounds itself against the goad far more than it was originally intended to be wounded!

No, Beloved, we cannot contend with our Maker. Are we wiser than He? Do we understand Providence better than He does? Can we sit in judgment upon Him? Do we dare to think of arraigning the great Judge of All at our bar? Let us only think of Him aright and we shall say, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because You did it." And, by the Grace of God, we shall get even further than that and be able to say with the Patriarch Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord…Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" What we often lack is the spirit of complete submission. If our childhood—I mean the childhood that comes of our regeneration and adoption into God's family—if that childhood does not teach us this submission, our commonsense ought to teach us. We ought to feel how absurd it is that we, who are but as a fly, should fight with the flame, for we can but burn ourselves by such folly! We cannot possibly carry on successful contention against One so great, so good, so wise as the infinitely glorious God!

I am going to speak to any who are in that contending state of mind and also to others who, perhaps, may get into such a state unless they are warned of the danger to which they may be exposed. The ship that is on the stocks and that has never been out to sea is astonished when it is told that such-and-such a vessel leaks in the day of storm! But when that ship is, itself, launched and gets out in the rough waters, it may come to wonder how the timbers resist the billows and how it is that anything keeps afloat at all. You who are young and inexperienced in the Christian life, and have never done business on great waters, may think yourselves competent to judge and to condemn the older ones for all their deficiencies and failures, but, perhaps, when you get into the same seas, yourselves, you may behave no better than they have done. Therefore, take warning beforehand and learn from Solomon's words a lesson concerning yourselves, that you may never set yourselves in opposition to the Lord God, or compare yourselves with Him.

I. The first subject of consideration in our text is OUR LIFE WHICH WE KNOW—"Who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow?"

We know something about our present life and what we know about it should humble us in the Presence of God, for, first, *it is very short*. Observe that Solomon, here, says nothing about the "years" of our life—he only counts it by "*days*." He looks at our earthly existence as of so short a duration that if he were to reckon it by years, he could scarcely mention it! But if he only counts it by days, he may use the word, "all"—"all the *days* of his vain life." And, my Brothers and Sisters, we only live by the day and scarcely as much as that! We are at least taught by our great Master to pray for daily bread, as if the nourishment was for a daily *life* which is always to be reckoned by the day. Yet is a day more than you and I can be sure of, for who knows what even a day may bring forth?—

"The rising morning can't assure
That we shall end the day,

For death stands ready at the door
To take our lives away."

At the very best, we can only count our lives by days. I know that we are often tempted to reckon that we shall live to a ripe old age, but, suppose we should he spared 70 or 80 years—what a short time the longest life is! Suppose we could live even as long as Methuselah did—which we cannot—yet how soon it would be all over and when we came to the end of it, we should say, with old Jacob, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." The fact is, the older a man grows, the shorter his life seems to be. And it was because Jacob was so old and had seen so many days, that he called them few and evil. Children and youths appear to have lived a long while—men seem to have lived only a short time, older men an even shorter period—but the oldest man reckons his days the shortest of all! The calculations about time are very singular, for length seems to turn to shortness! Well, then, since I am such an ephemeral creature, the insect of an hour, an aphid creeping on the bay leaf of existence, how dare I think of contending with You, my God, who *Was* long before the mountains were brought out and who will *Be* when mountains are gone forever?

Our life, besides being very short, is *singularly uncertain*—"All the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow." We do not know that we shall even have another day of this life. While we are sitting in the pew, our life may end. We cannot tell that we shall see next Sabbath—another Thursday night may never return to us. Do not let us forget this fact, for if the thought is unpleasant to us, it is because there is something wrong within. The child of God, when he is right with his Father, forgets the uncertainty and remembers that all things are certain in the eternal purpose and decree of God—and that all changes are wisely ordained and, therefore, the uncertainty causes him no distress. Yet should this Truth of God make us live with much caution, care, tenderness, and watchfulness. If I may have to appear before my Maker before the clock strikes the hour of midnight, let me set my house in order. Since I may soon die, and not live. Since I may be even now trembling on the verge of the unseen world, let me be prepared for everything by making my calling and election sure through faith in Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior!

Yet again, my Brothers and Sisters, our life is not only short and uncertain, but, while we have it, it is *singularly unsubstantial*. Many things which we gain for ourselves with much care are very unsatisfying. Have you ever heard the rich man confess that it is so? I have heard it often and have marked it well. I have looked over his spacious estate. I have sat in his sumptuous mansion. I have heard from him all about his success in business, yet he has added, and added solemnly (the old man spoke not mere words, but spoke it from his heart as he said it), "But what is it all? It yields me no satisfaction now that I am about to leave it." Have you ever heard the scholar, who has won many degrees and stood at the head of his profession, declare that the more he knew, the less he felt that he knew? In his acquirement of knowledge there was much vexation of spirit and he could sympathize with Solomon when he said, "much study is a weariness of the flesh." There is nothing truly

substantial apart from God, the Everlasting One, who lives and abides forever! Depend upon it, we shall, in a short time, prove the insubstantiality of our own lives! Worms will be scrambling for our flesh and if we have not Christ as our Savior, devils will be fighting for our soul—and we, unable to help ourselves—shall have passed away from all that we once thought real with a groan because it was so false and so deceptive. "Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity."

Now, look, my Brothers and Sisters, it ill becomes us, whose lives are so uncertain and whose lives at the best are so unsubstantial, to begin to contend with Him in whose hand our breath is and whose are all our ways! It were far better for us to submit ourselves to Him at once and to learn that in Him we live, move and have our being—and that if we live and move at all—it is all derived life and motion! It were well for us to also give the Lord all this poor life, be it what it may, to be used in His service and to be spent for His Glory. It will give us something comforting and cheering to look back upon, if we have submitted to Him and laid hold upon His way of salvation in Christ Jesus. And if, by His Grace, we have lived *in* Him, *with* Him, *through* Him and *to* Him, it will be *real* life—life that is substantial—"the life that is life, indeed." The shadow, as it really is, will be a substance veiled in a shadowy form. It will have been worthwhile to have lived, for I reckon that angels envy men, after all. They have not our battlefields—they cannot have our victories. It is true that they have not our sins, but they can never know "Free Grace and dying love" as we have known them! It is true that they have not to deplore wanderings such as ours, but neither have they been brought back upon the great Shepherd's shoulders. Nor has there been music made for them as for sons that were dead but are alive again!

If we play our part as Christians, well, they will think of us as Englishmen of old thought of their fellow-countrymen on a hard fought battlefield—they envied those who were privileged to fight battles that should bring to them such honor—and unfallen spirits might almost envy martyrs who can suffer for Christ, even to death, and men and women who, in their particular way, can contend against iniquity and bear their witness for the Truth and holiness of God and for the precious blood of the Only-Begotten in this sin-stricken world! May God help us to lay our poor life, such as it is, at His dear feet! It is only a flower, but if the flower is once put into His hand, it will not fade. It is a frail vase that is apt enough to break of its own weight, but if it is once presented to Him, He will preserve it and give it a place of honor in His palace above! If our poor life is given up to Christ, He will keep it for His own Kingdom and Glory. He will link it with His own immortality and give to us eternal life like to His own. Can we ever think of contending with Him? No, that can never be! Rather let us come and creep beneath the shadow of His wings. Let us be as little chicks that hide beneath the hen and He shall cover us with His feathers—and under His wings shall we trust. His Truth shall be our shield and buckler! We shall lose our nothingness in His eternal All and we shall become great, blessed, happy, everlasting in our God, through Christ Jesus, His dear Son!

II. Now I lead you on, in the second place, to another consideration, which is in the text—WHAT IS BEST FOR US IS NOT KNOWN TO US. It is ill for us to quarrel with God about His Providence, for Solomon wisely asks, "Who knows what is good for man in this life?" *We* certainly do not know, as to temporals, what is best for us in this life—neither do we know even in higher matters, in spiritual experience, "what is good for man in this life."

Suppose we ask the question, "Which is the better for a man in this life—*wealth or poverty?"*—what will be the answer? Wealth—the eye is dazzled with it! It brings many comforts and luxuries, yet there is a passage of Scripture as true, now, as when the Master first uttered it, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God." Paul wrote to his son, Timothy, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Scripture all through represents the acquisition of wealth as involving very solemn responsibilities and loading the soul with burdens. I do not doubt that there are some men who could never have sinned as they have done if they had not been successful in acquiring wealth. They could never have plunged into a damnation so deep as that which is theirs if they had not been able to indulge their lusts without stint. It must be a dreadful thing for a man with an evil heart to feel that he can get anything that his evil heart desires. Who knows, then, that wealth is a good thing? Do any choose poverty? There have been some men who have willingly chosen extreme poverty as a help to Divine Grace, but I gravely question whether it has been a wise choice. There is as much to be said concerning the evils and the disadvantages of poverty as there is to be said on the other side. He that lacks bread, he that has children about him crying with hunger, he that shivers in the cold blast is often tempted to envy—and to many other sins which he might not have committed if he had not been in that state.

It is not for you or for me to be able to balance the answer to this question, "Who knows what is good for man in this life—wealth or poverty?" There was a wise man who said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," and he seemed to have hit the golden answer. Yet I believe that there is many a man who has been helped to Heaven by his poverty. At any rate, he has been incapable of committing some sins into which he might have fallen if the means had been in his hand. He could not destroy himself so effectually in certain ways for lack of the power to do it. Brothers and Sisters, it may be that some of you will get to Heaven with many talents or pounds entrusted to you. There are others of you who would not get to Heaven at all that way, so you have not the talents or pounds committed to your charge. "Who knows what is good for man in this life—wealth or poverty?" We do not know, so we must leave the question unanswered.

Now take another question—that of *health or sickness*—"What is good for man in this life?" It seems, at first, that it must be good for a man to enjoy the best of health and the most sprightly vigor, does it not? We all wish for it and we are allowed to do so. Nobody thinks that sickness and

disease can really be, in themselves, a *blessing*. Yet have I seen some gentle, holy, devout, matured spirits that could not have come from any garden but that which was walled around with disease, grief and woe! I could quote many examples and I have seen full many of them. The engraver's best art has been spent upon them—the engraving tool has been very sharp and the hammer has smitten them very terribly. They had never been such marvels of the Master's Grace if it had not been for their sorrows! As for myself, personally, I confess that I owe more to the hammer, the anvil, the fire and the forge, than I do to anything else. I have learned to bless the hand that has smitten me! I dare not invite its blows, but it has never come to me without being full of benedictions. I have seen more stars by night than by day, and I have realized more of my Master's love and Grace in sorrow than I have ever done in joy. Yet I doubt not that there are other spirits who have been brought nearer to God in their gladsomeness, saints who, for very gratitude to God for their overflowing delights, the mercies of this life and the health of their bodies, have been drawn and bound more closely to their God. I am not going to decide the question—Solomon could not—so I will leave it unanswered. "Who knows what is good for man in this life—health or sickness?"

So is it with regard *to publicity or obscurity*. There are some persons whose Graces are best seen in public and they minister for the good of others. They have to be thankful that God has placed them in a position where they are seen, for it has led them to watchfulness and carefulness. The vows of God have been upon them and they have been helped in their way to Heaven by the very responsibilities of their public position. But, sometimes, I have wished that I might be a violet that I might shed my perfume in some lowly spot hidden by leaves. I would have liked, sometimes, to take my place in one of those pews and listen to someone else proclaiming the story of redeeming love. There must be a great privilege about going in and out of your humble home unseen and unknown—one would escape the public criticism and the unkind envy of many—and the weights of responsibility that are enough to crush us. Yet I do not doubt that obscurity has its ills as well and that many a man would gladly escape from it. "Who knows what is good for man in this life?"

I used to be constantly told by people that they prayed for me that I might be kept humble. Oftentimes I have thought to myself, "Dear Souls, if you would but pray that I might be kept alive at all, and *preserved from despair*, I would be much more thankful," for if God sets a man up as high as the cross of St. Paul's, he would be safer, there, than if the devil set him in an easy chair. If God takes His Son and sets Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, He is safe there. And if He were to come down and hide Himself, He would not be any safer. No, He would be in greater danger than He would be where His Father placed Him! All depends upon your being where God puts you. Any man is safe if he is where God would have him to be and if he trembles for his own safety and clings to the Strong for strength! But those who think that their position gives them

immunity from danger are already in peril from their fancied security! "Who knows what is good for a man in this life—publicity or obscurity?"

So I might go on with many other matters and say that it is very difficult, indeed, *impossible*, to judge which is better. What, then? I think that we had better be content to remain just as we are and be satisfied and thankful to be where God has placed us in His Providence. Who knows what is good for us? God does and that is better than for us to know!

Then let us enjoy what God has given us. Make the best of your position by enjoying every mercy that God has bestowed upon you—not fretting because He has not given you certain other things, but rejoicing that He has given you what He has bestowed. And use whatever you have to His Glory. Instead of repining that you have not three, four, five, or 10 talents, use the one that you have and put it out to interest for your Lord. Do not sigh for another place, as so many do—they are hoping, wishing and longing to rise in the world—and if they do not get what they hope for, they will be very grieved and greatly depressed. Rise, if you can, but if, with all your efforts, you do not rise, thank God all the same! You do not know what is best for you—that higher place might have been a snare to you, so be thankful to be where you are and sigh not for that position which God has denied you.

Neither dote on the things that you have, for they will all soon pass away. We are travelers and the world is but like an inn—if our room is uncomfortable, we shall be up and away in the morning! We are soldiers on the battlefield—if the field is rough and stony, let us fight the battle and win the victory—then we shall not mind what the soil is on which we stand! Remember that whatever *you* set your heart upon is probably a bad thing for you—if you make up your mind that you must have a certain thing, you have already made an *idol* of it—and if the idol should really become yours, it would bring a curse with it! Whatever we sin to gain, whatever we sin to keep must be bad for us. But whatever our heavenly Father sends to us must be right for us to have and we may well be content to let His unerring wisdom supply what is lacking through our ignorance.

I believe that the same question might be asked *concerning Christian experience*—"Who knows what is good for man in this life?" It must be good to be full of high joys—to rise to the loftiest heights of holiness and blessedness—must it not? Yes, yes, but it may be good to go down into the very deeps, to know the plague of your own heart and to feel the scourging of your Father's rod. "Who knows what is good for man in this life?" A mixed experience may be better than one uniform level either of height or depth. I have sometimes half envied those Brethren who are evenly the same in temperament, never going up and never going down, but I am not sure whether it is not better to go both up and down. I have had a taste of both experiences and if I could change to the uniform even tenor of my way, I would not dare to make the change! I feel about this matter very much as the old woman did when she had been long sick and one asked her, "Don't you wish to die?" She answered, "I wish the

Lord to do with me as He wills." "But," said the friend, "suppose the Lord put it to *you* whether you would live or whether you would die?" "Then," she replied, "I would give it back to Him and ask Him to choose for me, for I would not want to have the responsibility of the choice." Let us try to put ourselves wholly into God's hands—spirit, soul and body—and to beg Him to do just what He wills with us since we are quite clear that we do not know how to take care of ourselves!

III. Lastly, the text mentions another form of our ignorance and it is this—WHAT SHALL BE AFTER US IS NOT KNOWN TO US. "Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?"

The question may mean, *"Who can tell a man what he will yet go through in this life?"* He is now well-to-do. He is prosperous, he is healthy. But who can tell him what is yet to come to him? No one! Therefore let not the rich man glory in the wealth which may take to itself wings and fly away. Let not the man who is honored by his fellows reckon that the applause of men is any more substantial than a vapor. Let not any man glory in what he now possesses, for who can tell what may yet come to him—or be taken from him?

But I think that the text has its main bearing on *what will happen after death.* We *must* leave *that* with the Lord—it is not for us to know what will be done when we are called away from the earth. Many are plotting and planning to settle what shall come to pass after they are gone, yet much of their scheming is in vain. Somebody else will take that house which you have had such trouble to build. Strangers will tramp along those passages and laugh in those rooms—and know nothing about you. Your sons, whom you have brought up with the idea that they shall succeed you, may die before you do. You may have your estates entailed, as men try to do, and the chains of the law may seem to be riveted fast—but accident and the corrosion of time may bring them all to nothing.

"Who can tell a man what shall be after him?" I cannot tell what shall happen when my work is done—what shall happen here, who shall come here, where these people will go, what shall happen to the College, what shall become of the Orphanage—all these questions are proposed to me full often and friends ask, "What is to be done when you are gone?" Well, dear Friends, if you could tell me what will be done, I wish you would *not,* for I do not want to know! What has that to do with us? Are we not to leave the future as we leave the present—in the hands of God? And will not all be well? The Lord did very well without us before we were born and He will do very well without us after we are dead! I will not say that He will not notice our departure, for He notices everything, but it will be an almost inconsiderable item in the innumerable details of His universal government!

So, with regard *to our present service,* let us just feel this—"It is not for me to be worried because of what happens to me, or to quarrel with God about it." God sees the end from the beginning. He takes in the whole run of things and it may be for His Glory that some of us should work on throughout our whole life with very little success because He intends that the "work" should appear to *us,* but the "glory" to our children. He

may mean this age to be a time of sowing and the next age to be a time of reaping! He may mean that this century may be spent in compassing the walls of the Jericho of sin and that, all of a sudden, there will come a day which He has ordained for the tumbling down of every castle and every portion of that vast wall! It is for you and me to know that God sees further than we do and not to begin to measure His work with our ruler! Just leave it all with Him, you who are troubled either about the present or the future.

As for you who have no God with whom you can leave either the present or the future, you have cause to worry and you may well do so, for you have no Helper. You have no God to live with and no God to die with! No God for the Day of Judgment, no God to help you when you are driven from His Presence and from the Glory of His power. You have turned your back on Him—one day He will turn His back on you! You may well be afraid! You may well let care gnaw at your very hearts, for again I remind you that you have no Helper! Oh, that you were wise, that you would seek God in Christ Jesus and be reconciled to Him! May His infinite Grace bring you to this blessed condition!

But it is mainly to His children that I have been speaking. And to you who believe, I hope I need no longer say, "Let us joy in our Father's love and care, and not want to know what is before us, but be content to believe! Let us not want to judge, but be satisfied to leave all with Him." Thus, while we live, we shall praise His name, and when we die, we shall still go on praising His name forever and ever! I feel as if I could not help ending my discourse with that verse which I have often quoted before—

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King."

God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—757, 39, 626.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 147.

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.* "It is good," that is to say, it is a thing that *ought* to be done, it is a *right* thing "to sing praises to our God." "It is good," that is to say, it is profitable, it is beneficial to our own hearts. Prayer is refreshing, but praise is even more so, for there may be and there often is, in prayer, the element of selfishness—but praise rises to a yet higher level. Prayer and praise, together, make up spiritual respiration—we breathe in the air of Heaven when we pray—and we breathe it out again when we praise. "It is good to sing praises to our God." What a mercy it is that it is pleasant, too! There are many things that are good that are *not* pleasant, and many more things that are pleasant that are not good. But here is a holy duty which is also a heavenly pleasure! It is the bliss of Heaven to praise God. Let us anticipate that bliss by praising Him now, "for it is pleasant." And then there is a third commendation—

"and praise is comely." That is to say, it is beautiful, it is a good thing in its right place, it is according to the natural and spiritual fitness of things that God should be praised. In God's sight, one of the most beautiful things in the world is a grateful heart—"it is pleasant; and praise is comely."

2. *The LORD does build up Jerusalem.* There is something for which to praise Him. When the Jews came back from captivity and found their beautiful city all in ruins, God helped them to build it up, again, so they sang, "The Lord does build up Jerusalem." We may sing the same sacred song, for the Psalmist does not say, "The Lord has built," but, "The Lord does build up Jerusalem." He is going on to build it—the Divine Architect's plan of salvation is still being carried out! The great Master Builder is still placing stone upon stone in the wondrous courses of His election of Grace—"The Lord does build up Jerusalem." O Lord, build up this part of the wall!

2. *He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* Those that were far away, captives in Babylon, He brought back. God has a long arm which He is casting round His outcast chosen ones, for He means to gather them all to Himself. He has an elect redeemed people and they are scattered throughout the whole world—but even Caiaphas knew enough of the Truth of God to declare that Christ, "should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

3. *He heals the broken in heart.* He does it still, mark you, for the verb is in the present tense—"He heals the broken in heart." These are two of God's great occupations—to gather outcasts and to heal broken hearts."

3. *And binds up their wounds.* Oh, what a blessed God He is, thus to interest Himself in the sorrows of mankind, to give His infinite mind and heart to this wondrous work of healing the wounds of our lost humanity! You see, it is thus that the Lord builds up Jerusalem. The two verses are the complement of each other. "The Lord does build up Jerusalem"—with what? Outcasts, broken hearts and wounded spirits! Many of the stones that God puts into His great Temple are such as men would exclude. Broken hearts and bruised spirits that look as if they never could have any strength in them, God uses in building up His Church. What a wonderful leap it is from this third verse to the next!

4. *He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.* There is as much grandeur and glory in His compassion as in His Omniscience! To bind up wounds is as God-like a work as to count the stars. God does both, taking, perhaps, a greater delight in the first than in the second. There is not a star in the Church's firmament to which God has not given the light! He knows the number of His shining ones and He keeps their light burning—their names are all in the Lamb's Book of Life.

5, 6. *Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the meek.* That is the Lord's usual way—those that are down, He raises. But—

6. *He casts the wicked down to the ground.* This is what God is always doing—lifting up and overturning—putting people and things in their right places.

7. *Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp to our God.* False gods have been served with discordant yells and cries of agony, but our God is to be worshipped with songs of thanksgiving. Think not that He desires you to come before Him with groans and moans—He will hear them if they are sincere—but He would have you raise your hearts to something higher and better.

8. *Who covers the Heaven with clouds.* Little children do not think that is a matter for gratitude. They are sorry to see the clouds and the rain, but wise men know how filled with blessing are the clouds God sends. It is even so in Providence and Grace.

8. *Who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains.* For every blade of grass, we ought to thank and praise the Lord! If He is a benefactor who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, what a Benefactor must He be who makes *all* the blades of grass grow, without whom there would be none at all! Even on the mountains, where it may be that we have no cattle, yet there are wild creatures that must be fed, so the Lord makes the grass grow there, too! We are often selfish and we talk of things being useless if they are of no use to *us*. Are there no other living things, then, but men? And is God only to care for those animals which most of all rebel against Him? Let us think differently of this matter and bless the Lord for even the grass that grows on the waste places, where only the chamois or the wild gazelle will feed, for they, too, have their purpose to fulfill in God's sight.

9. *He gives the beast his food, and the young ravens which cry.* Unclean creatures though they are, God feeds them. We have known people have only one bird in a cage and yet forget to feed it. But God has myriads of birds, millions of beasts and innumerable fishes, yet they are not starved. The commissary of God never fails! My Soul, will He not feed *you*? If He hears ravens, will He not hear *your* cry?

10. *He delights not in the strength of the horse. He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.* Man boasts of his strength and he looks at his fine horse and glories in its strength. But God has something higher and better than sinew and muscle to boast about.

11. *The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him.* That is His joy. As a man is proud of his horse, or of the muscles which enable him to run swiftly, so God takes delight in those that fear Him—

11. *In those that hope in His mercy.* These are His jewels. These are His Glory.

12-14. *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders.* What a blessing this is, not only in a nation, but in a church! If you were ever members of a church where they seemed to quarrel punctually once every month, you would soon be sorry to be a professor of religion at all—but to live in a Church where brotherly love rules—this is a thing for which to praise the name of the Lord. "He makes peace in your borders"—

14. *And fills you with the finest of the wheat.* There is generally peace where there is plenty. Dogs fight when there are few bones. And when

God's people are well fed, they do not so often quarrel with one another. If they are fed with the finest of the wheat, there will be peace in their borders.

15, 16. *He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool.* Light and fleecy, it covers the plants and protects them from the cold. The snow is a kind of garment to protect them from the frost.

16. *He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.* You must often have been reminded of white ashes as you looked at the hoarfrost in the early morning.

17. *He casts forth His ice like morsels.* Hailstones, like little pieces of bread, broken off and scattered abroad,

17. *Who can stand before His cold?* In all this, the Lord is really fattening the soil and preparing food for man and beast in the coming spring and summer!

18. *He sends out His word, and melts them.* He has only to speak a word and the ice, the snow, the hoarfrost and every sign of winter will disappear—and we shall begin to swelter in the heat of summer!

18. *He causes His wind to blow* That is all—

18. *And the waters flow.* Ice saws and axes could not set free the frozen rivers but His wind, the very breath from the mouth of God, does it at once!

19. *He shows His Word to Jacob, His statues and His judgments to Israel.* And we have come into the place of Jacob and Israel, even we who have believed, for Abraham is the father of Believers and we are his spiritual seed according to the promise. So we have to bless God that He has showed to us His Word, His statutes and His judgments.

20. *He has not dealt so with any nation.* There are no other people who know the Lord as God's people do—and remember, they constitute one nation. We are Englishmen, perhaps, or Americans. That is a skin-deep distinction. But if we are in Christ, we are *one* family, we are of that *one* peculiar nation which, all over the world, is distinct from every other nation!

20. *And as for His judgments, they have not known them.* If they have been left in the dark, let us do all we can to carry or send the light of the Gospel to them! And as we think of the great things God has done for us, let us join in a joyful Hallelujah, as the Psalm ends—

20. *Praise you the LORD.*

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WHY MEN REJECT CHRIST
NO. 2463

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 3, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1886.

"And sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem." Luke 9:52, 53.

YOU hardly need that I should explain this action of the Samaritans. Probably our Savior's nearest road to Jerusalem lay through Samaria and He did not avoid that district, as many Jews did who went a long way around rather than pass through that unfriendly country. The Lord Jesus was so gentle, so meek and lowly, so much more a Man than a Jew, that it is somewhat strange that the Samaritans did not make an exception in His favor and treat Him courteously when He passed through their land. He, Himself, was quite free from all bigotry and was glad to mingle with all sorts of men, whatever their nationality. He sent His messengers to the Samaritan village to say that Jesus of Nazareth was passing through and wished to lodge there for a night—but they refused Him because it appeared to be His intention to go up to Jerusalem to keep the feast and it was their opinion that the feast ought to be kept in their own temple on their own mountain, Gerizim. Therefore, because the Christ was going up to the Jewish feast at Jerusalem, they would not receive Him. They were guilty of gross inhospitality in thus refusing to entertain a servant of God, for He was that in the esteem of many of them. And they were also guilty of still greater inhospitality which they did not understand, for they refused to receive the Son of God who, in human flesh, had come down to bless the sons of men!

I do not mean to say much about Samaritans in my discourse, for we have little or nothing to do with them, but I am going to use the text with reference to ourselves. I am sure that there is, here, a picture of many to whom I am now speaking.

I. First, I would remind you that the LORD JESUS CHRIST STILL SENDS MESSENGERS TO THE SONS OF MEN BEFORE HE COMES.

Before He comes, Himself, He sends His heralds. His own personal coming to the earth was heralded by a long line of Prophets and especially by John the Baptist. And when He had come into the world, He did not usually enter a place without giving some kind of notice to the inhabitants. He frequently sent before Him either evangelists, by two and two, to go into every place where He, Himself, would come, or else He commissioned certain messengers to give notice that the Christ of God was on His way to pay a visit of mercy. I believe that, nowadays, the Lord

Jesus Christ comes to many men in a very surprising manner. Before they are aware of it, His Grace steals into their hearts—He says to many what He said to Zacchaeus, "Make haste and come down, for today I must abide at your house." He speaks out of Heaven to some as He did to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus. He has differing ways with different men, but often, and with the most of us, He sends His messenger before Him before He comes Himself.

The message that we who are Christ's messengers have to bring is this—*we have to tell who He is* that has come among the sons of men, asking for entertainment in their hearts. Brothers and Sisters, it is God, Himself, the Lord of Glory, who has appeared in human flesh and has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He has come in the fashion of a Man. He has lived and loved and labored here below. He has died, He has been buried, He has risen again, He has gone back into Glory and now, spiritually, He is present among us! Here is His own declaration, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." We preach not to you, a merely human teacher—we preach One who is certainly Human, but who is also Divine. We preach not, only a Teacher, but a *Savior* who offered Himself without spot to God that He might put away the sin of all who believe in Him. And now, in the message of the Gospel, He comes again into our midst, even He whom angels worship, who is His Father's joy, the delight of His people, the hope of all who have a living hope, the pattern and the mirror of what His saints are yet to be! It is He of whom we speak—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, who is also very God of very God!

As His messengers, we have further to say that *He is willing to come and dwell in men's hearts*. The messengers who came to that Samaritan village proclaimed the good tidings, "The Christ is coming! The Christ is coming! He is willing to come and lodge with you." I think the loungers at the gate were, at first, astonished that the great Miracle-Worker should come to *their* village, to the Samaritans with whom the Jews had no dealings! And they went in and said to the people, "Jesus, who healed the sick, and raised the dead, is willing to come and stay a night with us." We tell you, dear Friends, that the Lord Jesus is willing to come to *you*, that He will be glad to find admission at the door of your hearts! It were good news if we could tell you that He would let you come to Him, but we tell you something better, that is—that He is willing to come to you! It were good news if we said, "If you entreat Him, if you beseech Him, if you constrain Him, He may, perhaps, come and stay an hour with you." But instead, thereof, we can come and say, "Our Master bids us tell you that He is willing to be received by you and that to as many as receive Him, to them will He give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name!" Oh, what glad tidings for your sinful hearts that the pure Christ is willing to come and live in you! Oh, what good news for you guilty men that the pardoning Christ is willing to come and take a lodging within your spirits! Tell it to one another wherever you dwell. Tell the good news that Jesus comes, not to pass by, nor even to sojourn merely for a night, but to come and take possession of the heart forever!

These messengers of Christ were also *to tell the people to make ready for His coming*. According to our text, Jesus sent "messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him." Make ready, then, for the coming of Christ into your hearts. "But," you say, "we cannot entertain Him as such a King should be entertained." It is true, Beloved, you cannot. But remember that this royal Guest asks nothing of you but that you give Him room to abide in your heart. The Master still says, as He did of old, "Where is the guest chamber?" He does not ask you to provide the fare for the feast, but only to prepare the guest chamber. He still says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Our great Melchizedek, when He comes to meet us, brings with Him the bread and the wine—the bread, His body—and the wine, His blood. He gives us food to eat that the world knows not. Whatever preparation you have to make is *not* a matter that is beyond your power!

I will tell you what to do to make ready for Christ—give Him a room that is *empty*. Drive out the sin that rules there, or rather, ask Him, *by His Grace*, to come and drive out His enemy and yours. If you are willing to have him driven out, Christ is both willing and able to drive him out. Say to the Lord, "Here is my heart, such as it is. It is all Yours." If you really say that from your heart, you are ready for Him! Tell Him that you grieve over your sin, for repentance will make you ready for Christ. Tell Him that you are a lost sinner and that your sense of need has made you ready to be saved by Him. Tell Him that you are willing to be renewed by His Grace. Tell Him that you desire to be holy, that you wish to be cleansed in His precious blood—this is the kind of readiness which Christ wants! The best preparation for a feast is hunger—there is no sauce like it. Readiness for being clothed is to take off your rags. Readiness to be washed is to see, and lament, and abhor your filthiness! Readiness to receive alms is to take the place of a beggar and to confess how poor you are. So, you see, I have asked no hard thing of you when, as the messenger of my Lord, I tell you that the King, Himself, draws near, even the Incarnate God, and that He is willing to enter into your hearts—and that all the readiness that He asks of you is that you open the door to let Him in!

But, my Brothers and Sisters, *the messengers of God have come to some of you a great many times.* I wonder whether some of you can remember the first sermon that ever made you weep? Do you remember the first holy book that awakened your sleeping conscience? Can some of you unconverted people call to mind your mother's tears and your father's prayers for you? You will have, as it were, to swim through the river of your mother's tears if you are resolved to go to Hell. Some of you will have to ride roughshod over your father's entreaties before you will be able to reach Hell! You have been called many times. You have been invited again and again! Take heed lest, one day, even the Christ should say, "Because I have called and you refused and I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded, but you have set at nothing all My counsel,

and would have none of My reproof, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes." The messengers of God and the messages of God are not to be trifled with! Sickness, losses, convictions of conscience and a thousand other things are messengers from the Most High! Let us not trifle with them any longer, but even now, as the Christ sends out His messengers, let us receive them gladly and say to them, "Tell your Master that we shall be glad if He will come to us."

II. Now, secondly, it appears from the test that although Christ sends out messengers to announce His approach, THERE ARE SOME WHO WILL NOT RECEIVE HIM.

These Samaritans would not receive Him and alas, the people who will not receive Christ are still very many! One would be glad to preach until midnight to sinners who would receive the Savior—no exhaustion would we mind if we could but preach to people willing to welcome our Master! We cannot make it out why some of you do not receive Christ as your Savior. There is so much about you that is hopeful and good that we cannot understand why you refuse Him. There are such blessings attached to the reception of Christ—even eternal life hangs on it—that it puzzles us how you can bar your door against this blessed Friend of ours—yet so it is.

Let me put it to you, dear Friends—I would like to "buttonhole" you, to take you by the hand and to say to you, "*God has sent His Son to be the Messiah*, the Mediator between Himself and you—why do you deliberately turn away from Him? He sent that dear Son of His into the world to save sinners and, in order that He might save them, He died in unutterable pangs upon the Cross! Do you really refuse to be saved by the merits of that matchless death? Is it so that you will both tempt the justice of God and reject the mercy of God?" The plan of salvation cost God His darling Son! Do you mean, in indifference, to say that you care not what it cost? Will you fling the Atonement to the winds and have nothing to do with it? Well, then, what I ask of you is just this—to really make this decision with deliberation if you are resolved to be lost. But I am not half as much afraid of you who would thus reject Christ as I am of the many who will not even think of Him—who take up neither one position nor another—but who let the whole subject slip by with a neglect that is a thousand times more contemptuous towards Christ than even if they had thought it out and had decided not to believe it. O Sirs, do not, I pray you, neglect the Christ of God and refuse Him whom God has sent to save you!

But there are some who *never think about Christ at all*. The year rolls on with scarcely a thought of Him. Look on the vast mass of London's population never going to any House of Prayer to hear about Jesus. There is but little reading of the blessed Book which tells us of Him! One might imagine that they regarded it as all old wives' fables, or a dream from the "Arabian Nights." Yet they do not go quite that length, for they have not thought enough about it even to say as much as that! What? Shall Christ die and yet you do not think His death worth a thought? Shall He, with His pierced hands, open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers and will you not even look to see what He has done? Oh, how

shall I plead with you? Would God that I had voice and heart commensurate to so stern a labor as that of pleading with consciences that go to sleep and hearts that lie dead in the Presence of a bleeding Christ!

There are also, alas, many who, though they *do* think of Christ, yet *reject the plan of salvation by the great Substitute*. They cannot see it, they say—they mean that they will not have it! They do not care to be saved by the atoning Sacrifice—they would sooner trust in something else. Oh, dear Friends, I am sure that if you would work that problem out with a little care, you would soon come to a different resolve! I remember, when under deep conviction of my guilt, with a strong desire to be better and to have peace with God, I tried prayer. I tried Bible reading. I tried diligent attendance to the means of Grace. I tried a change in my manner of life. I tried everything I could think of, but I never could find peace and rest until I cast myself on Christ's atoning work and trusted Him to save me! Then did I enter into the peace of God and found a joy and rest of spirit which I would not barter for all the crowns of all the kings who ever lived! I entreat you to think much of the sufferings of our Lord and consider what they meant. And I should not wonder that you will, at length, fall in love with the great plan of redeeming mercy by which Christ was made to suffer in our place, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree! At any rate, do give a full and fair consideration to God's way of salvation. Make room for it in your heart. Be ready to entertain the Savior, at least go as far as this—weigh His claims, judge His doctrine, see whether there is not about His atoning Sacrifice something of promise which is not offered anywhere else.

Yet it would not be sufficient, even if I could bring you to think of Christ and to judge somewhat more favorably concerning Him. I long—oh, that I had power to work this miracle, but I have not—I long to open some sinner's heart to let the Savior in! I know who will be the man who will be the first to welcome Christ. He who has no righteousness of his own! He who longs to escape from the wrath to come. I think I hear him say, "Sir, you put a question to me and I will put one to you. You say, 'Will you open your heart for Christ to enter?' O Sir, that is not the question! My heart is ready enough to receive Him, but can I *hope* that He will come in?" Soul, there was never a heart, yet, that was willing to have Christ but Christ gave Himself to that heart! There is no question about *His* will—the question is about *your* will. He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Now, if I were struck dumb—if this throat were choked up, from which for so many years has pealed forth as with the sound of a trumpet the Gospel of Christ, I should like my last words to be, "Come to Christ just as you are!" Never was a soul repulsed that came to Him, though black as midnight, though guilty of enough crimes to condemn it to all eternity! Only come to Jesus! Be willing and obedient, and you shall have Christ, for it is written, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Lord make all of you willing this very hour!

III. But now, thirdly, CHRIST IS OFTEN REFUSED FOR THE MOST ABSURD REASONS.

The Samaritans did not receive Him because He was going up to Jerusalem—so that theirs was a *sectarian reason*. They were Samaritans and He was siding with the Jews. I think that sectarianism anywhere is an evil thing, but let no man ruin his soul for the sake of being a sectarian! If I were the strictest Churchman, I would rather go to Heaven through hearing the Gospel preached by a Dissenter than I would be lost in order to remain a staunch member of the Established Church! And if I were a Dissenter, I would sooner go hear the Gospel fully preached in the Church of England and find Christ, there, than I would go and sit down in my own conventicle and listen to a sort of semi-Unitarianism of modern thought. The first and chief thing for my soul's good is that I must have Christ and, for my part, I care not where I find Him! Whether it is in a barn or in a cathedral, He is the same Christ to me. I would meet Him on the mountain's brow if He bade me go there, but I would also meet Him on the surface of the lake if He said to me as He said to Peter, "Come." Anywhere with Jesus, all is well! But away from Jesus, all is ill. Let nobody, then, refuse to accept Jesus Christ because of sectarian bigotry.

Was it not also for a *proud reason* that the Samaritans rejected Jesus Christ? What right had these Samaritans to dictate to the Messiah where He should go? If He chose to go to Jerusalem, had He not a right to go where He pleased? How often we, also, try to dictate to Christ! We think that He ought to save us this way, or that way. O Sirs, be willing to let the sinner's Savior save the sinner in His own way! Never dictate to Him who is Lord of all, nor reject Him through foolish or wicked pride!

It was a *selfish reason*, too, that made these Samaritans refuse to receive Christ. Dog-in-the-manger-like, they would not accept Christ, themselves, but they did not want Him to go to Jerusalem. I have sometimes heard it said, "If this Gospel is preached to the scum of society, to the outcast and the low, I am not going to hear it." Ah, my fine gentleman, you will not have it, yourself, and you do not want others to have it. I would be glad to come to Christ side by side with the foulest harlot who ever rotted into infamy! I would be glad to come to Christ with a criminal who was standing with the rope about his neck, about to be hurled into eternity by the common hangman! I would be glad enough to come to Christ with the poorest, meanest beggar who ever picked foul crusts from off a dunghill! So long as I can but get to Christ, who am I that I should find fault with my company? Come, Sirs, away with your pride! Yes, My Lady, or My Lord, you must come to Christ like anybody else! He cares nothing for earthly stars and garters, or honors and titles. He died to save sinners, even the very chief of them—and you are not in a fit state to be saved until you come down to the level which you think, now, so much beneath you, but which is, indeed, the true level upon which we must stand if we are to close in with Christ. O pitiful Samaritan pride and selfishness, unwilling that Christ should go to the despised Jews, for the proud Samaritan thinks, "If He comes to me, He ought to go to nobody else."

I do not think there ever was a *good reason for not believing in Christ*. I believe that the most unreasonable things in all the world are doubt and unbelief—in fact, atheists and infidels are the most gullible persons living! The modern scientist who does not believe in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and who pours scorn upon the New Testament, believes things infinitely more incredible than he can ever detect in Sacred Scripture! I do not hesitate to say that the whole theory of evolution is more monstrously false and foolish than any other ever conceived beneath high Heaven! It is a marvelous thing that men should be able to squeeze their minds into the belief of an absurdity which, in time to come, will be ridiculed to children in the schoolroom as an instance of the credulity of their ancestors. As one science, falsely so-called, has passed away, devoured by the next notion that men have adopted, so shall it be to the end of the chapter. He who will not believe God shall be the dupe of lies, but there is no good and valid reason why men should not accept the Christ.

You dear people who believe your Bibles and listen to the Gospel from week to week—yet who do not accept Christ as your Savior—are the most unreasonable of all people! If this Gospel is true, why do you not receive it? If Christ is the Savior of sinners, why do you not believe in Him? I could understand your casting your Bibles behind your backs and never coming to a House of Prayer again, however greatly I might lament such conduct, but I cannot understand the diligent hearer of the Word who commends and approves it all, yet never believes in Christ to the salvation of his soul! These Samaritans would not receive Christ and they gave as the silly reason for their rejection of Him that He was going to Jerusalem—and many who do not receive Christ must give equally unreasonable reasons for their unreasonable conduct!

IV. Now I must close by noticing that JESUS STILL ACTS VERY MUCH AS HE DID THEN.

First, *He does not send fire from Heaven to consume those who reject Him.* James and John came to their Master, when the Samaritans would not receive Him, and said to Him, "Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did?" Oh, dear! Well might the Master rebuke them, and say, "You know not what manner of spirit you are of." But have not I seen men so eager to convert their fellow men that they would even bully them to Christ? There never yet was a man bullied to the Savior! Men do not believe in Christ through being threatened and coerced. Persecution is the devil's work from beginning to end and it never succeeds and never will. The Savior gives us no permission to put it in action! He abhors it, for it is not at all according to His mind.

What, then, did the Master do? As He would not bring fire from Heaven upon the people who rejected Him, so also *He would not force Himself upon them.* Now, if you, my dear Hearer, do not accept Christ, you may not at once drop down dead—you may not find your house on fire when you get home or you may not become a beggar—that is not God's way of dealing with those who reject Christ! I have heard of an im-

pious man who said, "If there is a God, let Him strike me dead." It was because He *is* God that He did not take the wicked man at his word! Why should He? It is not according to the nature of God to act after that fashion. While you are in this world, listening to God's terms of mercy and Grace, if you choose to receive Christ it shall be a blessed thing for you. But if you refuse Him, there is not one of us who would lay a finger upon you to harm you, or who would desire that you should suffer in your mind, your person, or your estate! Our Lord and Master would not treat you so and He will not force Himself upon you.

When these Samaritans would not receive Him, He did not say, "Come, John, James and Peter, we will burst open the village gates—we will enter their homes—we will claim the lodging to which we have a right." Oh, no! That was not His way of working! The Lord Jesus Christ must be served willingly if He is served at all. And He must be received cheerfully if He is received at all. In many cases those who received Christ when He was upon the earth received Him gladly, and that is the only reception which He desires. Forced Christianity would be no Christianity! One volunteer here is worth 10,000 pressed men! Indeed, Christ will have no pressed men—all His soldiers must be volunteers. There is a delightful pressure of His Grace, but that never violates the will of man, though it sweetly inclines that will towards Christ.

What *did* the Master do when these Samaritans rejected Him? *He went elsewhere*. We read that "they went to another village." I fancy that I can see the Master and His little band of disciples waiting outside that village gate as the sun is going down. The Samaritans ask, "Is He going to *Jerusalem*?" Yes, He is. Then they tell Him that He cannot enter, He may go away and they will not entertain Him. He says not a word. He utters no complaint, but He just goes quietly down the hill, the little band following at His heels, and He walks away until He knocks at the gate of another village where they lodge Him for the night. That is all that will happen if you reject Him—He will go somewhere else.

But when I say that is all that will happen, it is a very great, "all." It is a very dreadful, "all," for my Master never seems to me more terrible than in His gentleness. You have refused Him, so He is going away. No thunder peals to alarm you, no lightning dashes to destroy you. Only He is going away! There is more terror in that going away than there would be in the tempest! One day, my Hearer, if you continue to reject Jesus Christ, when you shall be in another world, you will have to read, written in letters of fire above your head, these words, "He came to you and you would not receive Him, so He went to another." In the parable of the wedding feast, they that were invited, with one voice, began to make excuses and the Master of the house, being angry, said to His servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Is it not an amazing thing that, even when the Master was angry, He only did a *kind* thing to show His anger? And, dear Hearer, when Christ shall turn away from you because you refuse to receive Him, it will be only that He may turn somewhere else.

When Dr. Hawker was preaching, once, a learned man from London, who had listened to him, said, "I could not make heads or tails of the man's talk." Someone told the doctor what had been said. "Ah," he remarked, "I daresay the learned man could not understand the Truth of God I was preaching, but there were scores of old women in the aisles who could." So, if there are some who will not have Christ, there are plenty of others who will! If you who are rich, or learned, or great, will not have Him, He will give Himself away to the poorest, the lowest and the meanest who will accept Him—and they shall be in the bosom of their God at last, while you who were too proud to come to Him shall be cast away forever. O my dear Hearers, He stands before the door of your heart right now! He is gently knocking, not with a sledge hammer, but with His own pierced hand! Admit Him, admit Him, I beseech you! Admit Him at once! If not, it may be that He will never knock again. Probably He never again asked those Samaritans to welcome Him, but some other Samaritans did receive Him. He might reasonably have expected to be received by these villagers, but inasmuch as they said no to Him, He just turned His face from them and went away.

Shall He turn away from you like that, my Hearer? Shall He depart from you thus? What is your answer? "Yes," or "No"? Before you go out of this House, I beseech you to answer me, and I pray God to help you say, "Come in, my Lord, come in." May He grant it, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-24.

This is a very wonderful chapter because, while it teaches the doctrine of regeneration and the necessity of a great moral and spiritual change, it also reveals the doctrine of salvation by faith alone—a very wonderful combination which puzzles many who read what is recorded here. Many have been staggered by one or other of these great Truths of God, yet they evidently agree, for they are taught by the same unerring Teacher and they are preserved to us by the Spirit of God in the same chapter!

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him.* Nicodemus was very candid. He went as far as he could go. If he had not yet learned to believe in Christ as his Savior, he did, at least admit that Christ, upon the evidence of His miracles, was "a Teacher come from God." There is always hope of a man who is willing to see all that he can and who acknowledges what he can see. He will see "greater things than these" if he is willing to use his eyes.

3. *Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Without a new birth, "he cannot see," he cannot comprehend, he cannot understand, he cannot know *anything* about "the Kingdom of God."

4. *Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* Ah, me! Our blessed Master taught much by parables and parabolic teaching is the best of teaching, but you see how readily it can be misunderstood—how men can take the emblem in a carnal way and not understand its *spiritual* meaning. This is how the false doctrine of transubstantiation is taught. When Christ says of the bread, "This is My body," the Romanists take His words *literally*, and so miss their *spiritual* meaning. It was in the same way that Nicodemus fell into error concerning Christ's teaching.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* If the water here signifies *Baptism*—mark you, *if* it does—then, observe, that there is no entering into the Kingdom without it. I do not think that Baptism is here intended at all, but the purifying influence of the Word of God symbolized by water. We might read the verse, "Except a man is born of water, even of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." There is a great change of character necessary for entrance into the Kingdom—seeing it is one thing, *entering* into it is another matter—yet one cannot even *see* the Kingdom of God without being born again, or born from above.

6, 7. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said to you, You must be born again.* Nicodemus was well born, no doubt. Probably he was a pure Jew. Yet he must be born again. And you may have descended from a long line of saints—your parents may be in the Church of Christ and your parents' parents, too—but still the Truth of God remains, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." At its very best, it cannot rise above that which gave it birth, it is but flesh. "You must be born again." There is no hope for you apart from the new birth from above! You cannot see and you cannot enter the Kingdom of God merely by your first birth. Birthright-membership is a great delusion, for, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." And only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

8. *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* It is a mystery. You can never fully understand it, but you can enjoy it. If you are born again, you will know what it is—but you can no more discover your second birth than your first birth except by its results and effects. May God give you to know what it is to be born again! There are many doctors of divinity and men of great learning who know nothing about this new birth. And there are many who are mere babes in Christ who nevertheless enjoy the fruit of this blessed regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

9, 10. *Nicodemus answered and said to Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* These A B C Truths which are taught in the very first schoolbook used by Christ's scholars—"Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?"

11. *Verily, verily, I say to you, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen and you receive not Our witness.* This is true of all faithful ministers of the Gospel! We do not preach theories, we preach facts. We do not talk about speculations, we speak of a new birth through which we have, ourselves, passed. If there is no such thing, we are liars! But there *is* such a thing and this is our witness—"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." The fashion, nowadays, is to make statements upon religious matters with great caution, expecting to have them disputed. But we need exercise no caution when we state what we know to be true! We will be positive, we will utter our, "verily, verily," when we speak what is a matter of fact to our own consciences—"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not our witness."

12. *If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* Regeneration is a work that is worked here on earth and belongs to this present life. High as the mystery is, it lies but at the very threshold of the temple of Divine Truth—"If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" No doubt unbelief hides much of heavenly Truth from us, but if we begin to doubt the very elementary doctrines of our holy faith, how shall the great Master take us on and up to the higher science that He is ready to teach us?

13. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* This saying must have puzzled Nicodemus! He had, doubtless, read a great many riddles, but into the meaning of this riddle he could not enter. Yet, Beloved, any child of God, though he was converted only yesterday, may know what Jesus meant! Now observe that, as the first part of this chapter sets forth the need of a great and supernatural change, the latter part of the chapter shows us the door of mercy wide open and tells us that faith in Christ will save us.

14, 15. *And, 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 eternal life.* There is no contradiction here to what we have been reading. He that believes in Christ receives the new birth, receives eternal life and thus, by *faith*, gets that which is essential to a sight and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

16-18. *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.* What a charming sentence! What comfort it ought to bring to the mind of every sinner who will now believe in Christ!

18. *But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* "He that believes not is condemned already." If you have heard of Christ's salvation and you have not believed in Him, that is evidence enough of your condemnation! There is no need to prove your evil works. No need to fetch your diary

and turn over the record of your life. If you have not believed in Jesus Christ, it shows a natural lack of holiness, a lack of love to the loving God and, by that evidence you are condemned, already, because you have not believed in the name of the Son of God.

19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* The dislike of Christ is caused by a love of sin. If men did not hug their sins, they would embrace the Savior.

20, 21. *For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God.* If you do not like self-examination, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like reading heart-searching books, or listening to a faithful Gospel ministry, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like that part of the Word of God which judges you and makes you tremble, you can be sure that you are wrong! The man in business who cannot bear to look at his books, most probably has good reason to be afraid of his books. He shuts them up because they would shut him up if he were to pay attention to them! O Sirs, there is no more damning sign of human's condition than his endeavor to avoid the light! Search and see, look and examine! Make sure work for eternity—whatever you trifle with, trifle not with your souls! Take other things on hearsay, if you please, but not your condition towards God. Let that be searched into with all earnestness and sincerity—and be not satisfied till the Truth of God has satisfied you.

22-24. *After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.* We ought to be thankful that God's ministers are not silenced in this age. May the Lord raise up, in these evil days, many a John the Baptist who shall faithfully declare his testimony concerning the Lamb of God!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—552, 491, 549.

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

THE POWER OF A SIGH
NO. 2464

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 10, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1886.

"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him."
Psalm 12:5.

YOU must all have noticed that David lived in very evil times. When he wrote this Psalm, the days were dark and his cry was, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men," from which I gather that, bad as the times may be in which we live, there have been bad times before these. We are not the first persons who have had reason to complain of the evils by which we are surrounded. If we have to say that the love of many is waxing cold and the Truth of God is scarcely to be found, such experiences have happened to God's servants many times before. Let us not think it strange concerning the fiery trial we have to endure, as though we were the first persons to whom that trial has come. No, dear Friends, I feel greatly comforted when I remember that all through the history of God's people, there have been periods of darkness as black as that in which *we* live—times of trial and perplexity when it has seemed as if the whole course of nature was out of order—and as if the very foundations were removed, so that men were ready to cry, "What can the righteous do?" If it is so, that we are only weathering storms like those which tossed the boats of our fathers before us, and if their ships came safely into the harbor, notwithstanding the hurricane, let us take comfort and be assured that we, too, shall weather this raging tempest—and that for us there will yet be a season when we shall be glad because we are quiet, because the Lord has brought us into our desired haven.

My subject on this occasion leads me to speak to those who are in personal trouble and to say something concerning God's gracious dealings towards them. The text seems to me to tell us three things. First, that *God's people may be in a very sad case.* Secondly, that *God's people have a Friend at hand*, a Friend who can hear even their sighs. And, thirdly, that *this Friend will do them a good turn* when once He arises and takes their cause in hand. And He is certain to do it, for the text is virtually a promise—"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him."

I. First, then, GOD'S PEOPLE—His own people—His elect people—His redeemed people—His well-beloved people—MAY BE IN A VERY SAD CASE.

Certainly, to begin with, *they may be poor* and, in addition to that, *they may be needy*, for I take it that the words, "poor," and, "needy," have not quite the same meaning. A man may be very poor and that condition is bad enough, yet his needs may not be many. When he puts on his hat, he covers his whole family, and when he takes a crust into his mouth, he feeds his whole family. But, alas, there are many who cannot say that, for, in addition to being poor, they are very needy. They have a *number of mouths* to feed and a number of backs to clothe—they have more needs than *one* person would have if he were by himself. A man may have many who are so attached to him by the ties of nature that their needs become his needs and, therefore, in addition to being poor, he is needy as well.

It should not surprise any of us if we find ourselves to be poor and needy. The poor will never cease out of the land and, until Christ shall come again, there will be afflicted and poor people left who shall trust in the name of the Lord. Let us not say that because we are poor and needy, therefore we are not the Lord's. No, but let us rather argue the other way, for it is the *poor* to whom the Gospel is preached! It is often from among the poor that God chooses His very best and brightest servants. Certainly, if you take the line of history, you shall see electing love looking far more often into the cottage than into the palace! You shall see the redemption of Christ purchasing to itself precious souls more often among peasants than among peers and princes! They who have had least of this world's good have often had most of the good of the world to come—and they who have had most of this world's portion have, as a rule, had no portion at all in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Remember our Lord's solemn warning, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" And forget not Paul's words, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence." So the Apostle James writes, "Hearken, my beloved Brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?" You may, therefore, be poor and needy, and yet not only be among the Lord's servants, but be among the very best of them, among the very richest of them, among those whom He loves best of all!

But, next, God's best servants may be *oppressed* as well as poor and needy. The man who wrote this Psalm, the Lord's servant, David, was a man much oppressed. In his boyhood I imagine that he was the most despised of his father's family. I gather that from the fact that when his brothers came home to attend the sacrifice with Samuel, the Prophet, David was left alone to keep the sheep. Jesse brought all his sons except

young David, and set them before the Prophet. And even Samuel, when he looked on Eliab, said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me." But it was not so and after the seven sons of Jesse had appeared, and been rejected, the Prophet asked, "Are here all your children?" And the father answered, "There remains yet the youngest and, behold, he keeps the sheep." As soon as David came, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

When the stripling went down to the battle, he was snubbed by his eldest brother Eliab, although he was the one by whom the Lord meant to deliver Israel and to strike the Philistines! From his early days until the time when God set him in safety from him that puffed at him, David was terribly oppressed. Saul grew jealous as he heard the voices of the women singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." It soured the heart of the king of Israel and he could not bear to think of it! Gloomy and dark of mind, he thought of David as his supplanter and hurled a javelin at him, seeking to slay the one to whom he owed so much! David had to escape out of Saul's sight—you know how the king pursued him all over the country and followed him to the caves of the wild goats and to the valleys of the desert. David, though perfectly inoffensive, had to flee from his father-in-law, whose life he disdained to take when it was in his power. He was always kind, generous and faithful to Saul, yet he was always the subject of slander and oppression.

So, you see that God's servants may be oppressed. You may be a child of God and yet get a very bad name for yourself, yes, even through doing the things that are right and through being something more than what men ordinarily are! Poor Joseph was cast into prison, not through wrongdoing, but as the result of his chastity and purity. And many a child of God has brought upon himself an ill name by simply being faithful to the Truth and faithful to his God. Do not wonder if somebody who is set over you, deals very harshly with you. It may be that, in the Providence of God, it is intended that it should be so with you, especially in your youth. "It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth." And there are some men I know of who had very hard times as apprentices and as journeymen, who, nevertheless, in later life were obliged to feel that it was good for them that they were thus broken in. It was a breaking in, but it was a rough colt that needed it—and though the treatment was unrighteous and unjust on the part of the oppressor—yet God overruled it and made it work for good! He often takes His Joseph, who is hated of his brethren, and makes all the sheaves to be obedient to that sheaf—and the sun and the moon and the eleven stars of the family are obliged to honor that lone star which once they had so much despised.

Do not be astonished if your way is rough on the road to Heaven! Rather wonder if you come to a smooth portion—and when people begin to speak well of you, look about you and be a little afraid of what they are trying to do! Be not at all surprised when they abuse and misrepresent and slander you. Take all that as a matter of course and go to God with it. But when they begin to cry, "Hosanna!" do not think much of it. The same folk who shout, "Hosanna!" today, may cry, before the week is out,

"Away with him, crucify him, crucify him." Palm Sunday is not far off from Good Friday. The day of acclamations is followed very swiftly by the day of crucifixion!

Further than that, God's people may sometimes be so oppressed that they scarcely are able to speak for themselves at all. They may feel quite shut up and silenced. Read the text, "For the oppression of the poor, for the *sighing* of the needy." They dare not speak. They have to confine their language to a sigh! They dare not go and expostulate with the oppressor and state their claims to justice. They dare not go and tell a friend about the wrong, lest further mischief should come of it. They are so bound and shut up that they cannot come forth out of their prison—all that they can do is bear their burden in secret—and sigh like that holy woman whom God loved so much, whose adversary "provoked her sorely, for to make her fret." Hannah was a woman of a sweet poetic mind, perhaps the greatest poetess mentioned in Scripture, but she was so broken down by her sorrow that when she went up to the House of the Lord, she could not speak out! "Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." She was so overcome with sorrow that the priest of God did not understand her real condition, but began to rebuke her as though she had been drinking, whereas the only wine she had tasted had been the bitter cup of wormwood which her adversary had made her drink. You also, my Hearer, may truly be a child of God and yet be in a similar state to that of Hannah—unable to utter a word, but obliged to resort for relief to deep sighing—that expressive token of an inward, unutterable grief.

Once more, we may be God's people and yet *we may be very much despised*. The text speaks of the righteous man as being puffed at—"Him that puffs at him." You know, those who act thus, say, "Oh, he! Pshaw! She—oh, well! She—pooh!" Just as if they could not say anything that would express their contempt of such persons and so they just cry, "Pooh, Pooh! Why, they are not worth mentioning!" They cast out your name as evil. They will not say what the evil in your character is—but that is always worse than stating it. I have occasionally heard a person say of another, "Oh, So-and-So! Humph!" with not another word, but only a shrug of the shoulders. That is an abominable way of attacking another! If you have anything to say against a person, say it out, and let us know what it is. But that, "Pooh!" or that shrug, which may mean so much and yet may have nothing in it, is dastardly! It is like a poisoned dagger which should never be used by an honest hand. We may be God's people, yet we may be thus assailed.

Have not some of those who have fought their way to the front, some who have been the bravest champions for God, as David was, been puffed at? Eliab said to his young brother, "I know your pride, and the naughtiness of your heart, for you are come down that you might see the battle." That was said to the ruddy youth before the fight with Goliath—but the mockers dared not talk like that when he came back bearing in his hand the giant's gory head which he had cut off with the Philistine's own sword! They puffed at him and yet he was the man whom God had chosen who should be honored and reverenced by all the people of Israel! He was to be famous among the greatest of kings, yet he must begin as a

mere despised peasant boy! Never mind, young man, never mind what they say! They say, and they say, and they say—and when they have said it thrice, let them say it again as often as they please! As for you, go on in the path the Lord has marked out for you. Trust in God and serve Him faithfully and then fear not, and be not dismayed, whatever man may do to you!

Thus have I described the sad case in which a true child of God may be found.

II. It is more pleasant to turn to the second head and say that GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE A FRIEND AT HAND.

There is a Sister who may be in the congregation right now. If so, she will be pleased to hear that she gave me my text for this discourse. As many of you know, my dear wife very kindly selects for me the texts that make up the daily portions in our little penny Book Almanac—and she put down this passage among the others, "For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord." And the dear child of God to whom I refer wrote a letter to say how remarkably God had blessed this text to her comfort. She was in sorrow and trouble and somewhat given to sighing—and she thought that, perhaps, God was grieved with her for sighing—but this text greatly cheered her. She gives a little picture of what she thinks the texts means. I will tell you what she writes, for it will be the best part of my sermon by a long way.

She says, "When I am in bed and my little child wants its mother, if it utters a petulant cry, I do not take any notice of it. I know that it ought not to wake mother up and disturb her with its selfish cry. But if, instead of crying, it seems very weak, and very sad, and it gives a *sigh*, I cannot stand that, but go to it at once! When it does not cry to me, or cry for me, but I only hear it *sigh*, then I get out of bed at once and go over to the little cot to see what is the matter." "Now will I arise, says the Lord." See, it is the sigh that fetches the mother out of bed! There is great power about a sigh in the ears of a loving mother! If the child could speak and say, "Mother, come to me," mother might answer, "Not so, my Dear, lie still." Or if the child only cried out in hastiness, "Oh, come to me!" mother might reply, "Be still, child, be still. You are not suffering as much as you fancy you are." But when the child involuntarily, in its weakness and sorrow, utters a little sigh, mother has heard it, and she is at once out of bed and by the side of her little sighing child! Is not that a capital explanation of the text, "For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord"?

See, then, the power that there is in the sorrows of God's children to touch the heart of their great Father when *He hears their sighs*! When those sorrows come to be so bitter that the sufferers can scarcely pray. When they cannot find any language in which to express their grief. When even their desires seem to fail and they are so broken down and made so weak by the various troubles that have crushed them that it comes to just this sighing and nothing more, then God cannot be still, He must get up! He has gone away and hidden His face before, but now He sees that the time has come to manifest His unchanging love and Grace! "Now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that

puffs at him." Yes, Brothers and Sisters, God hears our sighs even if we cannot hear them ourselves! When we think we have not prayed at all, we have often prayed the best! When we imagine that our groans have been empty, they have often been the fullest! When we sigh because we think we do not sigh, God hears that sort of sighing which is only a *longing* to sigh! He hears the grief when the grief has no voice. He hears the sorrow when the sorrow cannot find a tongue.

Then note that as the Lord hears our sighs, *those sighs touch His heart*. The wicked have been puffing at the godly. They said, "Our tongues are our own, who is the ruler over us?" The Lord took no notice of them but let them blaspheme if they would. But there arose the sad sigh of His children and that touched Him! He could not bear *that*. It seems to me a very wonderful thing that the Almighty, the Infinite, to whom the Heaven of heavens is nothing, who takes up the isles as a very little thing, to whom all this system of worlds is but as the smallest grain of dust that does not turn the scale, yet is, as we say, "all there," when His children sigh—and His heart is touched, His heart is moved—His whole being is full of an infinite compassion! He cannot bear that sighing. "Now will I arise, says the Lord. I will get up from My Throne of Glory that I may deliver My people. I have heard their sighs and I cannot stay away from them! Love masters My Omnipotence! I feel but one force—the force of my overwhelming love! It sways Me and impels Me to speed to their relief. I will get out of My hiding places, I will end my withdrawals from them, I will rend the veil and come out from between the cherubim. Now will I arise, says the Lord." What has caused all this mighty movement? Nothing but the sighs of His needy people!

Will you also think that as this sigh is heard by God, it is a wonderful thing that God should speak of Himself as being *fully moved?* "Now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him." "Verily, you are a God that hides Yourself." The thunder, the tempest are but the hiding of His power—who can understand the fullness of His might? What must God be when He says, "Now will I arise"—like one who leaves his couch, like one who rolls up his sleeve to make bare his arm—like one who sets himself with intent and purpose to do some work that will require all his skill and all his power? Think of God arising in His might! When He arises, He shakes the earth terribly—nothing stands before Him when He once arises! Poor, sick, needy, sorrowing, sighing child of God, it is *you* who can bring Him into this marvelous state of activity! I tremble while I try to describe it—God making Himself fully God—arising, lifting up Himself, putting forth His power!

If you need a picture of it, remember Israel in Egypt. "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up to God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect to them." Did you ever hear that text preached from by Handel in his masterly oratorio, *Israel in Egypt*? How he makes all the music of all the stringed instruments and the voices of all the singers bring out that sigh!

"The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage...and God heard their groaning." Now I can understand all the rest of the song and all the rest of the music! I can understand how the chorus rings out with a great shout, "The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." The beginning, the meaning of it all is that they "sighed by reason of the bondage." "Now will I arise, says the Lord." And when He does arise, then the sea in the fullness of its strength is but the trembling instrument of His Omnipotence and soon Pharaoh and his horses and his chariots are drowned in its depths!

The same God lives forever and ever, and lives for you as He lived for Jacob's seed in the land of Mizraim! And you in your sorrow can still touch the heart of God as their sighing, because of their taskmasters, touched His heart in the days of old! And He will deliver you as He delivered them. Only sigh and cry to Him and He will come to you. He will come riding on a cherub, yes, riding upon the wings of the wind! And He will deliver you and you shall glorify Him, for what He has done, before, He will delight to do again, "for His mercy endures forever." Hallelujah! Therefore, let His people, even in their sighing, learn to rejoice in Him!

III. Now I must close by dwelling for only a few minutes upon the third point which is, WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE FETCH THEIR FRIEND BY THEIR SIGHS, HE WILL DO THEM A GOOD TURN. What does He say?" I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him."

You know what God did for David. There was Saul, hunting him everywhere, and I do not doubt that David was strongly tempted, sometimes, to seek safety for himself. He did some few things that looked as if he meant to preserve himself from the hand of his adversary. But once, when he caught Saul in a cave, entirely in his hands, he only cut off the edge of the skirt of the king's robe and let him go. It was a grand proof of the power of faith to abstain from touching the man who thirsted for his blood! That was another night of triumph for David when he went out with Abishai and they stole through all the ranks of the sleeping soldiers, threading their silent way till they came where Saul lay asleep in the trench, with his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster. And Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now, therefore, let me strike him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not strike him the second time."

He was ready to grasp the spear and give one thrust at Saul and pin him to the ground. And there was David, with the remembrance of his bitter persecution hot upon him. But he laid hold of his companion's hand and whispered, "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? David said, furthermore, "As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed: but, I pray you, take you now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go." So the two brave warriors threaded their way back through the sleeping host, taking with them the cruse of water and the spear that had been by the king's head, that he might see how nearly he had lost his life and how completely he had been in their hands. No,

David did not deliver himself from Saul's oppression—and it is a splendid evidence of faith when faith can hold her hand!

Perhaps you, also, have been oppressed. You have been ill-treated. You may have an opportunity of avenging yourself and if you are a child of the devil, you will do it. But if you are a child of God, you will say, "No, no, I have no vengeance to return. It is not mine to repay. The only vengeance I would return is to show sevenfold kindness for all the ills done to me. I will not lift my hand to deliver myself." Then God says, "Now I will do it. I will do it. I have heard the sighing of my poor child under all his oppressions, 'Now will I arise, says the Lord.'" And within a short space of time Saul falls by the arrows of the Philistines upon mount Gilboa and David is anointed first king over Judah, and, by-and-by, king over Israel as well! Against him no dog dares to move its tongue—he is the delight of the united nation and leads them forth to victories against the Philistines—for God has set him in safety from him that puffed at him!

Well now, God can take *any* of His children and do just the same for them! He can lift them out of their troubles and put them somewhere else where they shall be masters of those whose servants they formerly were. He shall lead your captivity captive and make you to come to the bright side of the hill if you have but had Grace enough to travel on the bleak side of it clinging only to your God! "I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him."

The Lord does that in many ways. Sometimes He takes His servants and puts them quite out of the power of their adversaries. Many a time in Providence has He done it. Sometimes He does not do anything of the kind, but He lets their adversaries puff at them, only He makes them feel that *all that they can do is puff*. Well, they may puff if they like till they have puffed their breath away! I like that picture Mr. Bunyan gives us when he represents the pilgrims going by the cave where Giant Pope sits and the giant has grown so crazy and stiff in his joints that he can now do little more than sit in his cave's mouth, grinning at pilgrims as they go by, biting his nails because he cannot come at them, and saying, "You will never mend till more of you are burned." But he cannot burn them, so he may sit there and say what he likes! And, sometimes, the children of God get so much Grace and so much faith that those who puff at them may keep on puffing, but the godly are far above it all!

Does it not sometimes happen that a Christian woman lives with a husband who makes everything very unpleasant, but her soul is so full of the love of God and she is taught so much patience that she is set in safety from him that puffs at her? Some child of God has to go and run the gauntlet of persecution and do battle in a workshop with ungodly blasphemers—but he walks so near to God and he is so peaceful and so full of the enjoyment of heavenly delights that, at last, he does not come to take any notice of all the puffing except that he is driven to more prayer and to a closer walk with God! "I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him." I do not know which is the better of the two—to get right away from the persecutors—or to be allowed to stay where you are and feel, "It does not matter. All the bitterness is gone, all the injury is

removed." Whichever God thinks is better for us and more for His own Glory, He will do, and either way we are content!

It may be that the one who puffs at some of us is neither a man nor a woman—we think that we could bear that kind of puffing—but it is the devil, himself. Oh, Sirs, we had better go a thousand miles around, over hedge and ditch, rather than once come into conflict with *him*! I have had a sharp brush with him now and again, but I still need to pray every morning that prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One," for all other temptations are as nothing compared with actual contact with that grim Evil One! He knows how to strike and he knows how to wound, but yet, if it were most for the good of others, if we, having to be leaders of others, must sometimes have a battle with the arch-enemy, it is a grand thing if the Lord so covers us with armor of proof from head to foot that He sets us in safety from him that puffs at us and we are made to feel that even the devil's temptations are but as puffs!

Yet, if that puff might bring a poisoned arrow into your soul, it is a blessed thing to feel that God can set you in safety from it all. For, "who is he that shall harm you?" Who is he? Our Master met him in the wilderness and fought him in a threefold duel and left the marks of His sword upon him. The scars are there and you and I may look that grim adversary in the face and tell him that we know his Master, and that he knows his Master, too, and that we are in that Master and that Master is in us and, as surely as He overcame, and triumphed once for us, so shall we overcome in His strength! So the weakest saint can say, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." With such a text as that, let us give him a deadly thrust and he shall spread his dragon wings and fly sway, discomfited by one whose sighs have brought God to his help, whose cries have brought Omnipotence to be infinitely more than a match for all the powers of darkness!

Now I have finished my sermon, only I have been thinking that there are some here who will say, "Alas, we are not the children of God and yet we are in trouble." Well, if you do not know yourselves to be the children of God and you are in trouble, yet the Lord our God is full of pity and full of compassion! He has pity, even, for natural and ungodly men when they are in trouble. I wish you would think of that, some of you who never prayed in your lives. If you are in trouble, now is the time to begin to pray! A Brother came to join the Church this week. He had been ill and sick for some time and he had gone to the hospital and obtained medicine, but it had not done him any good. He was about to take a dose of the medicine when it came to his thoughts, "I have never prayed to God to make me well." So he stopped and prayed a prayer to God, whom he did not know, that He would help him in his sorrow and his sickness and give him health. And he came to tell me how God dealt with him in mercy and how he was led by that answered prayer to put up many other prayers and to trust Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul!

Now, if you are in sore sorrow and in deep trouble, whatever it may be, turn to your God! He hears the young ravens when they cry. They cannot pray spiritual prayers any more than *you* can and yet He hears their

cries. Oh, if you are like the poor raven, yet let your cry go up to God and He will hear you! He is a God full of compassion. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." And He even has pity upon those who fear Him not! O my Hearers, try Him and trust Him for yourselves! Do not think harshly of my God! Fancy not that He is made of flint or granite. He will listen to your sighs, your cries and your tears. Only turn to Him with full purpose of heart and He will not cast you away. May He bless you now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:137-152.

Verse 137. *Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments.* It is well to be able to say this when you are being tried, when the hand of God lies heavy upon you. It is hard to kick against the pricks, but it is very sweet to submit and to say, "Righteous are You, O Lord, and upright are Your judgments."

138. *Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful.* "Righteous" for the present, "faithful" for the future. There is no mistake about God's Word—it will never fail—we may trust it implicitly and we shall never be disappointed.

139. *My zeal has consumed me.* The Psalmist had such zeal for God's Word that he seemed like a sacrifice consumed with the fire upon the Lord's altar!

139. *Because my enemies have forgotten Your Words.* First, they despised them, then they neglected them. At last they got as far as even to forget them! Forgetfulness of God's Word is a very dreadful stage of disease of the heart.

140. *Your Word is very pure: therefore Your servant loves it.* To love God's Word for its purity is an index of a pure heart. Some love it for its poetry, some love it for its doctrine, some love it for its mercy, but he is an advanced man in the kingdom of Grace who loves it for its *purity*.

141. *I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your Precepts.* Others may, but I am not following their example. It is well when a Christian man is a contrast to other men. When they call him a mere nobody, he adopts their words and says, "Yes, I am nothing. 'I am small and despised,' yet I do not forget the Lord's Precepts."

142. *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your Law is truth.* Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Here is the best possible answer—"Your Law is truth." Not only does it contain the truth, but it *is* the Truth. The Word of God is not only true, that is its quality—but it is the Truth of God, that is its essence. It is the cream of all truths. "Your Law is truth."

143. *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet Your Commandments are my delights.* "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me." Like two fierce dogs, they had fixed their teeth in him, yet even then he could say, "yet Your commandments are my delights." What a riddle is the man who knows God! He has great trouble and is full of anguish, yet he is delighted! How can these things be? The child of God knows what it is to be troubled on every side, and yet not to be troubled within.

144. *The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.* As if he could not live without it! He did not call it true living except as he understood and enjoyed the Precepts of His God!

145. *I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your Statutes.* Here we have both a prayer and a resolve; but the resolution grew out of the prayer and was connected with it. The Psalmist prays to God to help him to keep His Statutes. Are any of you hard put to it, just now, by strong temptation? I commend this verse to you—"Hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your Statutes." Cry to God, "Help me, O Lord; let not strong temptation drag me away from You! I long to be holy, my whole heart's desire is to keep Your ways; O help me, I pray You!" This verse begins with, "I cried," and the next verse begins in the same way—

146. *I cried to You.* It is good when you can cry. The living child cries and it is the man of God whose prayer is a cry of almost inarticulate utterance and grief—"I cried." "I cried." What did he cry?

146. *Save me, and I shall keep Your Testimonies.* David had no notion of salvation without obedience, so he prays, "Save me, and I shall keep Your Testimonies." Is that the salvation *you* desire—salvation from sin? If so, you shall have it! God, the Holy One, delights to bestow holiness, and He will speedily hear and answer such a prayer as that.

147. *I prevented the dawning of the morning and cried.* The Psalmist was still crying, crying early in the morning. Before the sun was up, he was up, and crying to God.

147. *I hoped in Your Word.* It is well when hope goes with prayer, when you begin to see daylight even before the sun is up. "I hoped in Your Word." Not in any enthusiastic impression of his own, but in God's Word, itself, the Psalmist placed all his confidence!

148. *My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate in Your Word.* As he was up before the sun, so he was praying before they set the guards for the night watch. And when they were changing guards and he heard the cry of the hour from the watchman, he was still crying to God! And at the same time he was meditating—"that I might meditate in Your Word." Ah, that is the way to cry! Meditation is very much neglected nowadays. We read, perhaps, too much. We meditate, for certain, too little. And meditation is to reading like digestion after eating. The cows in the pasture eat the grass and then they lie down and chew the cud and get all the good they can out of what they have eaten. Reading snips off the grass, but meditation chews the cud! Therefore, "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest." In this matter we often fail. We shall be wise to imitate David who devoted the early morning to prayer and the night watches to meditation.

149. *Hear my voice*—So the Psalmist used to pray aloud! It is a very great help in prayer if you can do the same. If we pray aloud to be heard of men, it is a sin. But if we pray aloud that we may hear ourselves, so that our devotion may be excited, we shall often find it very profitable. And if people hear us, by accident, so much the better—they are not hearing anything that will do them harm—they are hearing that which may do them good.

149. *According to Your loving kindness.* That is, do not hear it to judge it, to censure it, to criticize it, but hear it as a father hears his child, loving to hear its little voice speaking in broken accents.

149. *O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment.* Just now, the Psalmist prayed, "Hear me, O Lord!" In the 146th verse, He cried, "Save me." Now his prayer is, "O Lord, quicken me!" When God puts more life into us, then we have more strength to bear our burdens and, having more spiritual life, we have more power to resist temptation! Quickening is an essential mercy, containing within itself a multitude of blessings. "Quicken me according to Your judgment."

150. *They draw near that follow after mischief.* He could hear the sound of their feet behind him—they were running after him and he could detect the pitter-patter of their malicious footsteps.

150-151. *They are far from Your Law. You are near, O LORD.* What a comfort that is! They are *trying* to get near, but You *are* near! I can hear the tread of their feet behind me, but I can see Your face close to me! How comforted is the Psalmist in the time of trouble! His adversaries may be as keen of scent as bloodhounds, but God is with him, therefore he fears them not.

151-152. *And all Your Commandments are truth. Concerning Your Testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.* So that this Psalm was written by David when he was an old man. He had known the Lord's Commandments when he was young and now, in his declining days, he can say, "I have known of old that You have founded them forever." O young men, if you want to be happy old men, begin by knowing God's Word! If you have known that God has founded His Word of old, you know that which will comfort you when you grow old! In fact, you have found a perpetual spring within your heart, if, from your youth up you have known in the fullest sense the Word of the Lord! Some are changing their creed every day in the week, as the weather changes, but blessed is that man who has so learned Christ to begin with that he keeps in the old way all his life! He is the man who can truly grow. Transplant a tree six times a year and you will not get any fruit from it. But blessed are they that are planted in the courts of the Lord, for they shall flourish there and shall still bring forth fruit in old age!

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OUR OMNIPOTENT LEADER
NO. 2465

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 17, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1886.

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth."
Matthew 28:18.

I INTEND chiefly to call your attention to this verse, but it will also be necessary to refer to the rest of the chapter—"Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen"

Our Savior was always with His disciples until the time of His death. After His resurrection He was with them often, but not always. He came and He went mysteriously—the doors being shut, He was suddenly there when they least looked for him. Or He appeared to them as they walked by the way, or while they were fishing, or when they came to the mountain in Galilee, the appointed rendezvous. On this particular occasion—I am not quite sure whether it was when only the eleven were gathered together, or that more memorable occasion when He spoke to over 500 brethren at once, which many who have well studied the passage think is more probable—at any rate, on this occasion, the Savior made Himself very much at home with His disciples. According to the most proper translation of the text, "Jesus came and talked to them." There was a holy familiarity in His communications with His disciples. He spoke to them as a friend. He came into close contact with them in friendliest familiarity. The glory of that time to *them* was that *He* was there and that *He* spoke with them! It does not matter where it was, He was there, and wherever He pleases to be the center of the group, there is sure to be a memorable gathering. Brothers and Sisters, I wish that we were always on the lookout for our Lord. I am afraid that in our assemblies we often think and say, "So-and-So was there, and such-and-such a minister spoke to us." But the best meeting is when Christ is there and when He, Himself, by His Divine Spirit, speaks familiarly to our souls!

Notice what it was about which our Lord spoke to His disciples. He was going away from them. His bodily Presence would no longer be enjoyed by His followers until He should so come in like manner as they were to see Him go up into Heaven. But His last talk, or one of the last talks He ever had with them before His ascension, was about Himself and His work. It was a time of taking them into His secret, explaining to them the partnership which the Father had established between Him and

them, and making them to know the fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ which was now to cover the whole of their lives. You see, He begins by speaking to them about His own power—"All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth." We are not fit to go out to work for Christ till we truly know Him, ourselves, and also know something of the Divine power which He is prepared to give to us. It is well for us to learn the lesson, ourselves, before we attempt to teach it to others. Go not out to all nations till you have first gone into your closet and had fellowship with the Master, Himself! You will blunder in your errand unless you go forth fresh from His blessed Presence.

Then, what were they to do but to act for Him? "Go, therefore, and teach all nations." They were to teach those nations only about Him! He was to be the great Subject of all their teaching. The correct word is, "disciple all nations." They were to disciple them, not to make them their own disciples, but *His* disciples. He was to still be the Teacher, the Rabbi, the Master—they were only to go forth to do His work, not their own. Brothers, we must not try to form a party of which we shall be the head. We must abhor the very thought of any such action! We must gather the nations to Him! Otherwise, we are not His servants, we are our own servants, or rather, our own masters. We are renegades and disloyal if we do that. "Go, therefore, and disciple all nations," was the command of Jesus Christ to His disciples.

And they were to baptize those who were made disciples, but it was to be in His name, in association with that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. He who is not, as a Believer, baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is not baptized at all! The name of Christ is inseparably linked with those who are baptized according to the Scriptural fashion. So, you see, whether it is preaching, or whether it is discipling, or whether it is baptizing—we must keep close to Christ. It is all along that line we preach Him, we make disciples for Him, we baptize in His name.

And when those who were made disciples were baptized, what was to be done next? "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." The shepherding of the sheep must still be in our Lord's name! We do not found a church in any other name but His. Neither do we know any rule or order or book of discipline but that which He has left us. He, alone, is King in Zion, and only what He teaches is authoritative. The explanations given by His servants we must judge by the tests He has given to us—but the Word of the Master is to be obeyed and accepted in its entirety. "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." O Brothers and Sisters, there is no true work done for Christ unless we always put Him in His right place and keep ourselves in our right places—Himself the Omnipotent Leader and Commander of His people—and ourselves His servants in all things, seeking even in the smallest matters to be obedient to His revealed will!

Do not fail to notice that all this is to be done in association with Himself—"Lo, I am with you always." "It is not enough that you preach My Gospel, baptize in My name, teach all nations that I am the Lord and Master of the house and bid them all obey My will—you must also always have Me at your side. You will do nothing worth doing. You will spend

your life in failure unless you keep up perpetual communion with Me. 'Lo, I am with you always.'" This must be the case with us till this dispensation closes and it shall only close by our being with Christ in a still higher sense. We shall then go from His being with us to our being with Him—from spiritual fellowship to an actual, visible, corporeal fellowship! We shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is. He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth! He shall reign gloriously among His ancients and, until then, it is our privilege to abide at His side and never venture to go forth unless we feel that He goes with us, making our preaching and teaching in His name to be of effect upon the hearts and consciences of men.

I have missed my purpose in this preface if I have not brought out this line of thought—that if any of us would receive a commission for Christian service, it must come from Christ Himself! If we would carry out that commission, it must be in loyalty *to* Christ! And if we hope to succeed in that commission, it must be in a perpetual, personal fellowship *with* Christ! We must begin to work with Him and go on working with Him, and never cease to work until He, Himself, shall come to discharge us from the service because there is no further need of it! Oh, that we did all our Church work in the name of the great Head of the Church! Oh, that we did all Christ's work consciously in the Presence and in the strength of Christ!

Still only introducing my main theme, I shall ask you for a minute or so to consider the grand statement which our Savior made. "Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth."

"All power." Read it, if you like, "all authority." It is not so much force that is meant, as moral power. Christ at this moment possesses a royal authority—by might, it is true—but chiefly by right. His is the power which comes of His merits, of His glorious Nature and of the gift of the Divine Spirit who rests upon Him without measure. The word we translate, "power," has a wider meaning than that—you find a good instance of it in *John 1:12*—"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," where the word, "power," might be rendered, "privilege," or, "right," or, "liberty," and yet be also correctly translated, "power." Christ at this moment has all rights in Heaven and on earth! He has all sovereignty and dominion and, of course, He has all the might which backs up His right. But it is not mere power in the sense of *force*—it is not the dynamite power in which earthly kings delight. It is another and a higher kind of force which Christ has, even the Divine energy of love. He possesses at this moment all authority in Heaven and on earth.

"All power," He says, "is given to Me." That is to say, He has it *now*. You and I are not sent out to preach the Gospel in order to get power for Christ—He has it now! We are not sent out, as we sometimes say, to win the world for Christ—in the strictest sense, it is His now! He is the King of Glory at this very moment! He is, even now, Lord Over All, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! All authority is given to Him. I shall not try to explain the particular time when it was given, but I remind you that it *has been given*. That great act is accomplished! Our Lord Jesus holds in

His hand the scepter which gives Him power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. He already has in His hand that scepter with which He shall break the nations as with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel! He has not to go up to His Throne—He is already enthroned. He has not to be crowned—He is already crowned, as we have said, King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

"All power is given to Me." This is not merely the power which Christ possesses naturally by His Godhead, or a power which could be compassed entirely by His Manhood, for that must necessarily be limited. But it is a power which can be contained within that blessed complex Person, the Christ of God. It is as the God-Man, the Mediator between God and men, that all might is bestowed upon Him as the reward of the travail of His soul—boundless authority—so that now He can say, "All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth."

All power "in Heaven" belongs to Christ. That is, all power with God. You remember how Elijah prayed and opened Heaven by his prayers? The Christ of God is greater than Elijah! You know how men of God have been blessed with remarkable force and energy in their pleadings—but the intercessions of Christ are more powerful than all the intercessions of His people—yes, in one sense, they are the power that gives effect to all the intercessions of all the saints! It is He who puts power into them and into their petitions. Of course, as Christ has power with God, He also has power over all the holy angels and all pure intelligences. All power of every kind that has to do with heavenly things and heavenly places is in the hand of Christ.

And Christ also has all power, "on earth." That is to say, He is Lord over all the earth. "The sea is His and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land." He is Master of all Providences—His hand always holds the helm and steers the ship that carries His disciples. He is Master of all kings and of all politics and when, at times, we tremble for our beloved nation, there is no real need for us to do so. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." Christ has all authority over all the sons of men and all the forges of nature. From the stars that light up the brow of midnight, to the deepest law that works in the heart of the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ is Master of them all! All power, He says, is given to Him in Heaven and on earth! This is a statement which would need a far fuller explanation than I can give it in the time at my disposal just now—I want, rather, to make use of it in this way.

I. First of all, let me say of this statement of our Lord—"All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth"—that WE GREATLY REJOICE IN IT.

I do not know that our Divine Master could have said anything to us that would have made our hearts thrill with a sweeter delight than we derive from these words—"All power is given to Me." Beloved, do you not wish all power to be given to *Him whom we love?* I confess that nothing makes me rejoice more than the fact that He reigns. I do not feel any sorrow so much as the sorrow of seeing His Truth trod in the mire and I know no joy that ever thrills my soul like that of knowing that Jesus is still set as King upon the holy hill of Zion, that He still reigns and that,

"He must reign till He has put all enemies under His footstool." Is there any power you would like to keep back from Him? Is there any power you would like to invest in someone else? Is it not the delight of your soul to think that He could say, even when He dwelt here among men, before He had ascended to the Father, while yet He talked as others talked with His poor disciples, "All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth"? Do we not feel ready to shout, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" when we know that this is really the fact?

We delight also, dear Friends, to know that all power is in the hands of Christ because we are sure that *it will be rightly used*. Power in the hands of some people is dangerous, but power in the hands of Christ is blessed. Oh, let Him have all power! Let Him do what He will with it, for He cannot will anything but that which is right, just, true and good. Give Him unbounded sovereignty! We want no limited monarchy when Christ is King! No, put every crown on that dear head and let Him have unrestricted sway, for there is none like He. He is more glorious than all the sons of men and it is our joy to know that all power is given to Him in Heaven and on earth!

This also furnishes us with *good reasons for often going to Him*. I love to think that all power is in Him and none in me, for now I cannot stay away from Him. I am obliged to knock at His door and if He asks me why I come so often, I must answer, "It cannot be helped, my Lord, for all power is with You! If I had power to provide for myself, I might try to do so, but since, without You, I would die of hunger, I must come to You for every meal and every snack, yes, for every breath and every pulse." Yes, it is even so because all power is given to Christ that we rejoice that we may always go to Him! Will you chide a babe because it longs for its mother's breast? How can it live without its natural nourishment? And can you chide our feebleness because it loves to hang upon the Omnipotence of Christ?

We are glad, again, that all power is given to Him because *He is so easy of access*. It is difficult for those in need to speak with kings, but it is not difficult for them to tell their needs to the King of Kings! It is not easy to present a petition to an earthly prince, but it is very different with those who have requests to bring to the Prince Immanuel—His door is always open to suppliants and His ear and heart are always ready to listen to their supplications. Call upon Him when you will, He will never repel you! Come to His strength whenever you may—that strength will flow out to your weakness and make you strong in the Lord and in the power of His might! I leave that first thought with you—we rejoice that all power is given to Christ.

II. Secondly, WE SEE THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME OF THIS TRUTH. "All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth. *Go, therefore*."

I have met with some Brothers and Sisters who have tried to read the Bible the wrong way upwards. They have said, "God has a purpose which is certain to be fulfilled. Therefore we will not budge an inch. All power is in the hands of Christ. Therefore we will sit still." But that is not Christ's way of reading the passage! It is, "All power is given to Me, therefore go, you, and do something." "But, Lord, what do You want from us when You

have all power? We are such poor, insignificant, useless creatures that we shall be sure to make a muddle of anything we attempt." "No," says the Master, "all power is given to Me, therefore go." He puts us on the go because He *has* all power! I know that with many of us there is a tendency to sit down and say, "All things are wrong. The world gets darker and darker and everything is going to the bad." We sit and fret together in most delightful misery and try to cheer each other downwards into greater depths of despair! Do we not often act thus? Alas, it is so and we feel happy to think that other people will blend in blessed harmony of misery with us in all our melancholies! Or if we do stir ourselves a little, we feel that there is not much good in our service and that very little can possibly come of it. This message of our Master seems to me to be something like the sound of a trumpet. I have given you the strains of a dulcimer, but now there rings out the clarion note of a trumpet! Here is the power to enable you to "go." Therefore, "go" away from your dunghills, away from your ashes and your dust. Shake yourselves from your melancholy! The bugle calls, "Boot and saddle! Up and away!" The battle has begun and every good soldier of Jesus Christ must be to the front for His Captain and His Lord. Because all power is given to Christ, He passes on that power to His people and sends them forth to battle and to victory!

Yet is there another note in this trumpet call. "All power is given to Me, go, therefore"—"Go *you*." Who is to go out of that first band of disciples? Is it Peter, the rash and the headstrong? Is it John, who sometimes wishes to call fire from Heaven to destroy men? Is it Philip, with whom the Savior has been so long and yet he has not known Him? Is it Thomas, who must put His finger into the print of the nails or he will not believe Him? Yet the Master says to them, "Go you; all power is given to Me, therefore go. You are as good for My purpose as anybody else would be. There is no power in you, I know, but then all power is in Me, therefore go." "Go, you worm, Jacob, and thresh the mountains, for I have made you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. Go in all your weakness, for this is your might—the might that dwells in Me! Go and teach all nations. Poor, weak, feeble, faulty, yet go because I have all the power you can possibly need."

"Go, go," says Christ. "But, Lord, if we go to men, *they will ask for our passports*." "Take them," He says, "all authority is given to Me in Heaven and earth. You are free of Heaven and you are free of earth. There is no place—whether it is in far-off Ethiopia, or in the deserts of Scythia, or in the center of Rome—there is no place where you may not go! There are your passports—'All authority is given to Me, therefore go.'" "But, Lord, we need more than passports, *we need a commission*." "Here is your commission," says the Lord—'all power is given to Me'—and I delegate it to you. I have authority and I give you authority. Go, therefore, because I have the authority. Go and teach princes and kings and beggars—teach them all alike. I ordain you, I authorize you! As many of you as know Me and have My love shed abroad in your hearts, I commission you to go and—

'Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found.'

And if they ask how you dare to do it, tell them not that the bishop ordained you, or that a synod licensed you, but that all power is given to your Master in Heaven and on earth and you have come in His name!" And nobody may say no to you.

"Moreover," says the Master, "*I send you with My power gone before you*" Observe that, for I bring it, again, to your recollection. Christ does not say, "Go and win the power for Me on earth. Go and get power for Me among the sons of men." No, but, "All authority and power are already vested in Me. Therefore go. I send you to a country which is not an alien kingdom—I send you to a country which is Mine—for all souls are Mine. If you go to the Jews or to the Gentiles, they are Mine. If it is to India or China that you go, you need not ask any man's leave—you are in your own King's country, you are on your own King's errand—you have your own King's power going before you."

I believe that, often, when missionaries go to a country, they have rather to gather ripe fruit than to plant trees. As the Lord sent the hornets to clear the way for the children of Israel, so does He oftentimes send singular changes—political, social and religious—before the heralds of the Cross to prepare the way for them! And this is the message which sounds with clear clarion note to all the soldiers of King Jesus, "I have all authority in Heaven and on earth, therefore, without misgivings or questionings, go and evangelize all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Thus, first, we rejoice in this grand statement of our Lord Jesus Christ, and next, we see the practical outcome of it.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, WE FEEL THE NEED OF IT.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if anybody in this place knows the power which is in Christ to make his ministry of any use, I am sure that I do! I scarcely ever come into this pulpit without bemoaning myself that I should ever be called to a task for which I seem more unfit than any other man that was ever born! Woe is me that I should have to preach a Gospel which so overmasters me and which I feel that I am so unfit to preach! Yet I could not give it up, for it were a far greater woe to me *not* to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Unless the Holy Spirit blesses the Word, we who preach the Gospel are, of all men, most miserable, for we have attempted a task that is impossible—we have entered upon a sphere where nothing but the supernatural will ever avail! If the Holy Spirit does not renew the hearts of our hearers, we cannot do it! If the Holy Spirit does not regenerate them, we cannot! If He does not send the Truth of God home into their souls, we might as well speak into the ear of a corpse! All that we have to do is quite beyond our unaided power—we must have our Master with us, or we can do nothing! We deeply feel our need of this great Truth of God—we not merely say it, but we are driven every day, by our own deep sense of need, to rejoice that our Lord has declared, "All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth," for we need all power! Every kind of power that there is in Heaven and on earth we shall need before we can fully discharge this ministry. Before the nations shall all be brought to hear the Gospel of Christ, before testimony to Him shall be borne in every land, we shall need the whole Omnipo-

tence of God! We shall need every forge in Heaven and earth before this is done! Thank God that this power is all laid by ready for our use—the strength that is equal to such a stupendous task as this is already provided!

IV. I must pass over much that I might have dwelt upon and say, in the next place, WE BELIEVE THIS TEXT AND WE REST IN IT. "All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth."

We believe in this power and we rest in it. *We do not seek any other power.* There is a craving, often, after great mental power—people want "clever" men to preach the Gospel. Ah, Sirs, I fear that the Gospel has suffered more damage from clever men than from anything else! I question whether the devil, himself, has ever worked so much mischief in the Church of God as clever men have done! No, we want to have such mental vigor as God pleases to give us, but we remember that text, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." The world is not going to be saved by worldly wisdom or by fine oratory—brilliant speeches and poetic periods win not souls for Christ! The power to do this is the power that is in Christ. And the Church of God, when she is in her right senses, does not look for any other power. I mean that she does not cringe before kings and princes, and cry, "Establish us, endow us!" It is an old fiction that the royal touch can cure "the king's evil." But it is an old fact that the king's hand brings an evil whenever it is laid upon the Church of Christ by way of patronage. No, kings and queens, we can do without you! If you will come to Jesus' feet as humble suppliants, you shall be saved even as your subjects are, but the Church of God has a Kingdom that is not of this world and needs no help whatever from the kingdoms of this world. All power for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ is in Himself—His own Person sustains His own Kingdom and we will not go to any other fountain of authority to draw the power we need. The Church of Christ must always say to Him, "All my fresh springs are in You."

And, dear Friends, we believe and rest in this Truth, *defying every other power*. Every other power that can be conceived of may set itself against the Kingdom of Christ, but it does not matter! No, not one whistle of the wind, for all power is already in Christ, and that which seems to oppose His Kingdom must be but the mere empty name of power. There can be no real power about it, for all power is in Him—both in Heaven and on earth!

This being so, we rest quite sure that *even our infirmities will not hinder the progress of His Kingdom.* No, rather, we glory in our infirmities, for now the power of Christ will become more conspicuous! The less we have by which the Kingdom might be supposed to be extended, the more clearly will it be seen that the Kingdom is extended by the power of the King, Himself.

At the same time, *all power that we have, we give to Him*, because all power is His and all power that we ever possess, we lay it under tribute for Him. Whatever is of good, or of brightness, or of light, or of knowledge in this world, we say, "It all belongs to Jesus." And we set the broad arrow of our great King upon it and claim it as His.

O dear Friends, why are we ever cast down? Why do we ever begin to question the ultimate success of the good cause? Why do we ever go home with aching head and palpitating heart because of the evils of the day? Courage, my Brethren, courage! The King has all power, it is impossible to defeat Him! A standard-bearer fell, just now, I know, and across the battlefield I see the clouds of smoke. The right wing of our army may be shattered for a moment, but the King in the center of the host still rides upon the white horse of victory—and He has but to will it, He has but to speak a *single word*—and the enemy shall be driven away like chaff before the wind!

V. Lastly, and here I should have liked to have had much time, but I can only hint at what I would have said. If it is so that all authority is given to Christ in Heaven and on earth, then WE MUST OBEY IT.

Christ says, "Go." Then, *let us go at once*, according to His Word, in the track which God's own hand marks out for us! Let us go and disciple all nations! Let us tell them that they are to learn of Christ and that they are to be obedient to His will. Let us also baptize those who become His disciples, as He bids us do—"baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Next, *let us be loyal to Him in all things* and let us train up His disciples in loyalty to Him—"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." As He has all authority, let us not intrude another authority. Let us keep within the Master's House and seek to know the Master's mind, to learn the Master's will, to study the Master's Book, to receive the Master's Spirit and let these be dominant over all other power. And all the while let us endeavor to keep in fellowship with Him—"Lo, I am with you always." Let us never go away from Him. Because all authority is given to Him, let us keep close by His side. Let us be the yeomen of His guard. Let us be the servants who unloose the laces of His shoes, who bring water for His feet and who count ourselves highly honored to do so. "Lo, I am with you always," He says, so let us always be with Him.

And let us always keep *expecting Him to return*. The last words of the chapter suggest this thought—"even to the end of the world," or, "of the age." You know that this age is to end with a glorious beginning of a brighter and better age. Therefore let us keep looking for it. Servants, you will not serve well unless you expect your Master's return! If you say, "He delays His coming," you may begin to eat, drink, and to be drunk, and to beat your fellow servants. Let the expectation of your Lord's return always keep you on tiptoe, with your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, for, perhaps this very night there may be heard in our streets, the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom comes! Go out to meet Him!" May we all be so ready that this cry would be the sweetest music that our ears could ever hear! God bless you, Beloved, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—775, 340, 324.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
COLOSSIANS 1.

Verses 1-2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul begins with a salutation in which he wishes the Colossian Christians the best of all blessings. It is the very spirit of our holy religion to wish well to others and I am sure that we cannot have a better wish for our dearest friends than this, "Grace be to you, and peace." Grace will save you—peace will make you know that you are saved. Grace is the root of every blessing—peace is the sweet flower that makes life so sweet and so fragrant. May you have both of these blessings "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"! There is no peace for you apart from this blessed combination—God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, may you know your adoption and may you know your redemption!

3, 4. *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.* We are not only to pray for those who have no faith, but the very fact that men have faith should lead us to pray for them. Where there is evidently life in the seed and it begins to sprout, let us water it with our prayers and with our thanks, too. "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus"—

4, 5. *And of the love which you have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof you heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel.* "Faith"—"love"—"hope"—these are three Divine sisters which should always go hand in hand. We must never be satisfied unless we see in ourselves and in our fellow-Christians these three delightful fruits of the Spirit of God! Notice the order here—faith, love and *then* hope. Perhaps the Colossians were a little deficient in this last Grace, so the Apostle prayed constantly for them, "for the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof you heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel."

6. *Which is come to you, as it is in all the world, and brings forth fruit, as it does also in you, since the day you heard of it, and knew the Grace of God in truth.* We do not know the Grace of God in truth unless it brings forth fruit in us! We may know it with the head very correctly, but yet we do not truly know it unless it is knowledge in the *heart*, knowledge in the inner man. We do not really know it unless it affects our lives and brings forth faith love, hope—faith, which lifts us above the world. Love, which preserves us from selfishness. And hope which keeps us up under all trials.

7, 8. *As you also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.* I like to read of these godly men speaking well of one another. Nowadays, it is thought to be a distinguishing mark of faithfulness to be able to pick holes in the coats of our fellow Christians. Now, we cannot help perceiving their defects and, sometimes, it is our duty to speak of them—and to speak of them faithfully—but let us also observe all the *virtues* that are to be found in them, otherwise we may despise the work of

the Holy Spirit and rob Him of His Glory! How kindly Paul speaks of Epaphras, and how kindly Epaphras speaks of the Church at Colosse!

9. *For this cause we, also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.* If you have the Graces of the Spirit, it is important that they should be deepened, that they should grow through being fed with Divine nourishment. What the water is to the plant, making it further to develop itself, that is the knowledge of God's will to our gifts and Graces—they grow and become fruitful through an increase in the knowledge of God.

10-14. *That you might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, to all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* Now the Apostle is handling the string he most delights to touch! He is at home with everything which concerns the welfare of saints, but when he begins to talk of his Lord and Master, then it is that he seems to ride in a chariot of fire with horses of fire—and he grows mightily eloquent under the Inspiration of the Spirit of God! See how he talks of the great central Truth of God of the atoning Sacrifice—"In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

15-18. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, for by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth; visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body.* Note how Paul harps upon that one string, "He." See how much He dwells upon the Divine Person of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He will never have done praising Him! He keeps on heaping up epithets to magnify that blessed name and he truly was in the Spirit of God when he did this, for it is the work of the Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ. He makes Him great in our hearts and then we try to make Him great by our words and by our acts.

18-22. *The church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, I say, whether they are things in earth, or things in Heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight.* O, Beloved, as the sun is to be seen mirrored, not only in the face of the great deep, but in every little drop of dew that hangs upon each blade of grass, so is the glory of Christ to be seen, not only in His universal Church, but in every separate individual in whom His Spirit has worked holiness!

23. *If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven; of which I, Paul, am made a minister.* How delighted he is to have such a Gospel to preach, such a hope to tell to the sons of men! Oh, if we had to creep from a sick bed, or to come up from a dungeon—if we were aching in every bone of our body and if we were depressed in soul—this ought to be enough to make us full of gladness to overflowing, that we have such a Christ to preach and such fullness of blessing to declare to the sons of men!

24. *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church.* As if there were so much suffering to be endured to bring in the redeemed from the world and so much self-sacrifice to be made in order that those whom Christ has redeemed may come to know of that redemption and may be brought to Him. And Paul was glad to make up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, "for His body's sake, which is the Church"—

25. *Of which I am made a minister.* This is a wonderful expression, "made a minister." The true minister is of God's making! A man-made minister must be a poor creature, but a God-made minister will prove his calling—"of which I am made a minister"—

25-27. *According to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God; even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory.* "Christ in you" is Glory begun, a sure pledge and earnest of a Glory greater than you can yet conceive! If He is in you, you have the beginnings of Heaven! You have, in fact, the excellence and flower of Heaven, for there is no Heaven but the Glory of Christ.

28, 29. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily.* If God's people strive mightily, it is because God works mightily in them! Nothing can come out of a man but what God puts into Him. We work to will and to do when He works in us according to His good pleasure. Oh, for more of the agonizing of the Spirit within us, that there might be more of agonizing in our spirits for the Glory of 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.

UNPURCHASABLE LOVE
NO. 2466

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 24, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1872.

"If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised."
Song of Solomon 8:7.

THAT is a general truth, applying to all forms of real love—you cannot purchase love. If it is true love, it will not run on rails of gold. Many a marriage would have been a very happy one if there had been a tithe as much love as there was wealth and, sometimes, love will come in at the cottage door and make the home bright and blest, when it refuses to recline on the downy pillows of the palace. Men may give all the substance of their house and form a marriage bond—the bond may be there, but not that which will make it sweet to wear. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised."

Who, for instance, could purchase a *mother's* love? She loves her own child, especially because it is her own. She watches over it with sedulous care. She denies her eyes the necessary sleep at night if her baby is sick and she would be ready to part with her own life sooner than it should die. Bring her another person's child and endow her with wealth to induce her to love it, and you shall find that it is not in her power to transfer her affection to the son or daughter of a stranger! Her own child is exceedingly precious to her and another infant, who to an unprejudiced eye might be thought to be a far more comely baby, shall receive tenderness from her—for the woman is compassionate—but it can never receive the love that belongs to her own offspring.

Take, again, even the love of friends. I only mention that to show how true our text is in relation to all forms of love. Damon loved Pythias—the two friends were so bound together that their names became household words and their conduct towards one another grew into a proverb. Yet Damon never purchased the heart of Pythias and neither did Pythias think to pay a yearly stipend for the love of Damon. The introduction of the question of cost would have spoiled it all! The very thought of anything mercenary, anything like payment on the one side or receipt upon the other, would have been a death blow to their friendship. No, if a man should give all the substance of his house even for human love, for the common love that exists between man and man, it would be utterly despised!

Rest assured that this is pre-eminently true when we get into higher regions—when we come to think of the love of Jesus and when we think of that love which springs up in the human breast towards Jesus when

the Spirit of God has renewed the heart—and shed abroad the love of God within the soul. Neither Christ's love to us nor our love to Him can be purchased. Neither of those could be bartered for gold, or rubies, or diamonds, or the most precious crystal. If a man should offer to give all the substance of his house for either of these forms of love, it would be utterly despised.

I. We will begin at the highest manifestation of love and commune together upon it. So let me say, first, that THE LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS ALTOGETHER UNPURCHASABLE.

This fact will be clear to us if we give it a moment's careful thought. Indeed, so clear is it that I scarcely like to multiply words upon it, and I do so only that you may dive the deeper into this glorious Truth of God! It must be quite impossible to purchase the love of Christ because *it is inconceivable that He could ever be mercenary*. It would be profane! Surely it would amount to blasphemy and a very high degree of it, to suppose that the love of His heart could be bought with gold, or silver, or earthly stores. No, if He loves, it must be all free, like His own royal Self! If He deigns to cast His eyes so far downward as to view the creatures of an hour and to set His love upon them so that His delights are with the sons of men, it is not possible that He could gain anything from them! No, were we angels, we could not think that He could love us because of some service we could render, or some price we could pay to Him!

The bare idea runs cross and counter to all we know of Jesus. It is a flat contradiction of all our beliefs and all our knowledge concerning Him. He loves us because He pities us, but not because there is a fee when He comes to us as the Great Physician. He instructs us because He grieves over our ignorance and because He knows the sorrow of it—and would have us learn of Him—but His instructions are not given in order that we may, each one, bring our school pence to Him. He labors, it is true, but none shall say that He labors for hire, though if He asked all worlds for His hire, He might well claim them for such labors as those which He has performed!

The feats attributed to Hercules are nothing compared with the wonders worked by Christ. He has cleansed stables far more filthy than the Augean and slain monsters far more terrible than the hydra-headed demons of the ancient fables. True, "He *shall* see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." There was a joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Yet the love that lay at the bottom of it all was love unbought, love unsought and love in which not so much as a single atom of anything like selfishness could ever be discovered! The pure stream of His love leaps like the crystal brook and there is no sediment that can be found in it. It is altogether unmixed love to us.

Besides, Brothers and Sisters, there is another point that renders this idea of purchasing Christ's love as impossible as the first thought shows it to be incredible—*for all things are already Christ's*. Therefore, what can be given to Him wherewith His love could be purchased? If He were poor, we might enrich Him, but all things are His! "He was rich," says the

Apostle. "He *is* rich," we may also reply! He could say to us, at this moment, if we were so foolish as to attempt to bribe Him to win the love of His heart, "I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he-goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountain and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof."

All things are Christ's, not only on this speck of a world, but throughout the universe! The things that are soon by us are as nothing compared with the things that we have *not* seen—yet all belong to Christ and He has the power to create ten thousand times more than as yet has been formed by Him! There is nothing which He conceives in His infinite mind but He could at once fashion it by His almighty power! There is nothing He might desire but He could, in an instant, command it to appear before Him. "Let it be," He might say, and it would be even as He had said! Therefore, how could you bribe Him and where is the substance of your houses that you would give in exchange for His Divine love? O you who dwell in houses of clay, where is the substance which you could bring to Him who is Lord of Heaven and earth? Our substance? It is but a shadow! Our wealth? It is a child's plaything in His sight—it is *nothing* compared with His boundless riches!

Let us also note that if Christ's love could be won by us by something we could bring to Him or do for Him, it would suppose that there was something of ours that was of equal merit and of equal value with His love, or, at any rate, *something which He was willing to accept as bearing some proportion to His love*. But, indeed, there is nothing of the sort! Gold and silver—I scarcely like to mention them in the same sentence with the love of Christ! I am sure our poet was right when he said—

"Jewels to You are gaudy toys
And gold is sordid dust."

Think of the difference between gold and the love of Christ in the hour of pain, in the hour of depression of spirit—what can the strongboxes of the merchant do for man, then? But one drop of the love of Christ helps him to bear up, however fast the heart may palpitate, or however much the spirits may have been cast down! What is the use of earthly riches when one comes to die? One laid his money bags close to his heart, to see if they could make a plaster that would give him rest, but they were hard and cold! But the love of Jesus, like the touch of the king's hand in the old superstition, heals even the disease of death, itself, and makes it no longer death to die!

There is nothing, then, by way of treasure that could be compared with the love of Christ. I will say it, and every Believer here will agree with me, that there is no emotion we have ever felt in our most sanctified moments—there is no holy desire that has ever flashed through our soul in our most hallowed times, there is no seraphic longing that has ever been begotten in us when the Spirit of God has been most operative in our hearts—that we should dare to put side by side with the love of Christ and say that it was at all fit to be reckoned as a fair price for it! Our best is not one-thousandth part as good as Christ's worst! Our gold

is not equal to His clay. There is nothing that can be found in us, or that ever will be in us, that we should dare to say could, for a moment, stand in comparison with His love!

Well, then, since there is no coin of metal, or emotion of mental condition, or power of spiritual Grace that could be counted out or weighed as the purchase price of Christ's love, we will not dream of having anything of the kind, for there comes, at the back of this thought, the consciousness that even if we do possess anything that is really valuable, if there is something about us, now, that is commendable, pure and acceptable, *yet it all already belongs to Christ*. We have nothing with which we can buy anything of Him because all we have belongs to Him! Under the righteous Law of God, all the good of which we are capable is already due to our Creator! His command is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Very comprehensive, very sweeping are the demands of the Law of the Lord. You must not *imagine* that there is the slightest truth in the idea that man may come to do more for Christ than it is his duty to do—this cannot be, for all that is possible for us to do is already Christ's! "You are not your own," and yet you talk about giving yourself to Him? You belong to Him, now, you Christians, doubly so. And all men are under obligation to Christ even for the temporal favors He has bestowed upon them. You, Believer, cannot say, "Now I am going to do for Christ something more than, I think, might absolutely be claimed by Him." Why, if you are really what you claim to be, you are His, already—body, soul and spirit! All your time, all your money, all your faculties, all the possibilities that are in you, are all His right now and, therefore, how shall you come to purchase His love? No, it cannot be purchased! That is certain for many other reasons besides these which I have given you.

But what a blessing it is that *we have the love of Christ, though we could not purchase it!* The Son of God has loved us! He has bestowed upon us what He never would have sold us and He has given it to us *freely*, "without money and without price." And, Beloved, this love is no new thing. He loved us long before we were born! When His foreknowledge sketched us in His mind's eye, He beheld us in love! He proved His love, too. It was not merely contemplative love, but it was practical love, for He died for us before we knew anything of Him, or were even here to learn about Him! His love is of such a wondrous kind that He always will love us. When Heaven and earth have passed away and, like a scroll, the universe shall be rolled up, or be put away like a worn-out vesture, He will still love us as He loved us at the first. The greatest wonder to me is that this unpurchasable love, this unending love is mine! And you, my Brothers and Sisters, can always say, each one of you, if you have been regenerated, "This love is mine! The Lord Jesus Christ loves me with a love I never could have purchased."

Perhaps someone is saying just now, "I wish I could say that." Do you really wish it? Then let the text serve to guide you as to the way by which you may yet know Christ's love to you. Do not try to purchase it—abandon that idea at once! Perhaps you say, "I never thought of buying it

with money." Possibly not, but the mass of mankind think of purchasing it in some way or other. They hear from their priests of certain ceremonies and they attach great importance to them—and offer them as a bribe to Christ. But these things will never buy His love! They then resort to prayers—not prayers from the heart, but prayers said as a sort of punishment. And it is thought by many that surely, *these* will procure His love—but they never will! We have even known some who have punished themselves, tortured themselves, thinking they would get Christ's love in that fashion! Now, if I knew anybody who tried to win my love by making himself miserable, I would say to him, "My good Fellow, you will never make me love you in *that* way! Be as happy as you can—that method is a great deal more likely to touch my heart than the other." I don't believe that penance and mortification afford any pleasure to God! I think He would be more likely to say, "Poor silly creatures! When I make gnats, I teach them to dance in the summer sunshine. When I make the fish of the sea, they leap up from the waves with intense delight. And when I make birds, I show them how to sing." God has no delight in the miseries of His creatures and the flagellations that fools give to themselves when they think they deserve them, but they certainly bring no pleasure to the heart of God! It is vain to think of purchasing the love of Christ in such a way!

"But surely, surely, we may do *something*. We will give up this vice, we will renounce that bad habit, we will be strict in our religiousness, we will be attentive to all moral duties." So you should! But when you have done all that, do you think you have done enough to win His love? Is the servant who has only done what He ought to have done, entitled to the love of His master's heart because of that? You shall not *win* Christ's love! So, if you have His love shed abroad in your heart, you have infinitely more than you have ever earned. Suppose some person here were to say, "I feel so resolved to be saved that I will give all I have in this world to some good cause! And then I will give myself to go abroad into foreign lands, to some fever-stricken place to die in the service of God?" Ah, should you do all *that*, you would be utterly despised if you thought that would purchase the love of God! Will He be bartered with? Will He put up His heart to be sold in the market—He whose very Temple was defiled by the presence of buyers and sellers? It cannot be! Go and haggle and bid, and barter with your fellow men—even *they* will disdain you if you think that love is thus to be procured! But dream not that you are thus to deal with your God! I say again, it cannot be!

The text does not merely say that the price would be refused, but, "it would be utterly despised." Love would open her bright eyes and look at the man—and then she would frown and say, "How can you insult me so? Take back your gold and be gone!" And God's great love, even when His pity was in the ascendant, would but weep a tear and then reply, "I pity you, for you know not what you are doing. And I despise the price you bring to Me. How could you think that I was such an one as yourself and that My love could be purchased with paltry pelf that you bring?"

We cannot spare more time for this point, but it is one that you may think over for many a day—and your heart may be charmed with it till you love and bless your Savior with all your heart, mind, soul and strength!

II. My second remark is that IN OUR CASE, NOTHING CAN EVER SERVE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE.

If Christ has loved us, or if we are desirous of realizing that He has done so, *the one thing necessary and essential is that we have true love to Him.* God's demand of each one who professes to be His child is, "My son, give Me your heart." There are many who would like to be thought to be His sons and, therefore, every morning they wickedly say, "Our Father which are in Heaven," though God is *not* their Father! If they were to say, "Our Father," to Him who is their father, they would pray to the devil, for God is no father of theirs! Alas, there are many who want to be thought to be God's children and they will come and bring to Him anything but love. Sad, sorrowful truth!

If God would but say to men, "I will accept *unspiritual service*," He might be the God of the whole earth at once! Or rather, let me more truly say that He would be the *demon* of the whole earth, for men do not care what the religion is *externally* as long as it does not trouble their hearts! The last thing some people will do is to think. "Give you a guinea? Oh, certainly! Excellent is the charity for which you are pleading. A guinea for the hospital? Certainly! Five guineas for a new place of worship? Certainly! When I have money, I am always glad to give it, but don't come and bother me with any of your *doctrines*, for I don't want to hear about them! You religious people are so divided into sects and parties—and you are always controverting and contradicting one another, so I do not want to think about these things." That is a very poor excuse, is it not? Because this seems to be a matter which requires a great deal of thought, therefore this person will not give it any consideration at all! And because those who *do* think about it do not exactly agree on all points, therefore this man says, "I shall not think of it at all." Because all the charts of an intricate portion of the ocean may not happen to be exactly alike, therefore this man will not even study that part of the sea over which his own vessel must go, although *there* all the charts *do* agree! He makes an excuse upon some trivial matter to neglect altogether the steering of his vessel. He will strike upon a rock, one day, and he will have no one to blame for it but himself.

"Oh," says another person, "I don't mind saying prayers. Or I will go to church and listen to the reading of prayers. I don't mind hearing sermons, but don't come and tell me that *I have to repent of my sins.* I cannot do it! I do not understand what you mean. I join in 'the General Confession' every Sunday. I say that I am a miserable sinner though I don't know that I am particularly miserable and I don't know that I am particularly a sinner, either. But still, I always say that and I don't mind saying it. Yet if you were to come to me, saying, 'Repent'—I cannot do that." Men will offer to God anything but that which has to do with the heart. You may call upon them to torment their bodies, as the priests of

false religions have done, and they will not object to *that*. The fakir in Hindustan will pierce himself with knives, or lie upon a bed of spikes, or swing himself up by a hook in his back and hang there by the hour, together, in all but mortal agony! A man will do almost *anything* except bow his heart before his God! He will not confess that Jehovah is Lord of all and that he, himself, is a poor sinful creature who deserves to be punished. He will not obey a law that is spiritual and demands the allegiance of the secret thoughts and intents of his heart. And he will not accept a faith which is so superlatively pure that it demands that sin be given up and tells him that even when given up it must be washed in the precious blood of Jesus—and that a man must exercise repentance towards God and faith in the Savior or he cannot be saved.

The most unpopular Truth in the world is this sentence which fell from the lips of Christ, *"You must be born again"* and, consequently, there are all sorts of inventions to get the Truth of God out of those words! "Oh, yes," say some, "you must be born again, but that means the application of aqueous fluid to an infant's brow!" As God is true, that teaching is a lie! There is no grain or shade of the Truth of God within it! "Except a man be born again" (from above), "He cannot see the Kingdom of God." No operation that can be performed by *man* can ever regenerate the soul! It is only the work of God, the Holy Spirit, who creates us anew in Christ Jesus! Men do not like that Truth of God. The spiritual displeases the natural man. They will profess to worship God in Jerusalem or at Gerizim—and fight about the place where He ought to be worshipped. To show how little good their religion has done them! They will not speak to each other! The Jew will have no dealings with the Samaritan—to prove how unlike he is to the God who makes His sun shine both on the just and on the unjust! And when you utter this message, "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," both Jew and Samaritan are offended and turn away!

Still the Truth holds good, whatever men think of it. If you give not to God your heart, you have given Him nothing! If you give not to God your soul, if you love Him not, if you serve Him, not because you love Him, if you come not to Him and surrender to Him your inner self, you may have been baptized—immersed or sprinkled—you may have come to the Communion Table, you may have bowed your knees till your knees have grown calloused, you may have prayed till you are hoarse and wept till the fountains of your eyes are dry. You may have given all your gold and lacerated every member of your body with mortifications and starved yourself to a skeleton—but you have truly done *nothing* towards obtaining love to Christ! The substance of your house is utterly despised if you offer it to the Lord in place of the love of your heart! Love He must have! This is His lawful demand! His people delight to render it and if you do not, then you are none of His!

III. This takes us to a third Truth of God, which is that THE SAINTS' LOVE IS NOT PURCHASED BY CHRIST'S GIFTS.

The love of saints to their Lord is not given to Christ because of His gifts to them. I must explain what I mean, lest at the very outset I am

mistaken or misunderstood. We love our Lord and we love Him all the more because of the many gifts He bestows upon us—but *His gifts do not win our love*. I will show you why. All that He has given me, today, He gave me many years ago. The Covenant of Grace was always mine. I heard the preacher talk about it. He told how Christ had died for me, that He had loved me and given Himself for me. Truly, He had done so—He had poured out His blood for my redemption. I would not believe it to be so, or, believing it, I did not think it was of any consequence. Then the preacher spread out the rare gifts of Christ before me and I saw that He had given these to such as believed in Him—but I did not think them worth examining and I turned away from them. I would never have loved Him if He had not given me much more than the substance of His house. I needed His blessed Spirit to show me the *value* of the substance of His house and, above all, to show me that for which this day I love my Savior best of all, namely, *Himself*—HIMSELF!

Oh, it is "Jesus Christ, Himself," who wins the love of our hearts! *If He had not given us Himself, we would never have given ourselves to Him.* All else that may be supposed to be of the substance of His house would not have won His people's hearts until, at last, they learned this Truth, and the Spirit of God made them feel the force of it—"He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

"My Beloved is mine, and I am His," is now one of the sweetest stanzas in love's canticle! The spouse does not say, "His *crown* is mine, His *throne* is mine, His *breastplate* is mine, His *staff* is mine." She delights in everything that Christ has as a King, Priest and Shepherd—but, above all else, that which wins and charms her heart is this—"He, *Himself*, is mine, and I am His."

But I meant mainly to say, under this head, that *there are some of Christ's gifts that do not win our hearts*, that is to say, our hearts do not depend upon them. And they are, first, His temporal gifts. I am very thankful and I trust that all God's people are, also, for health and strength. I have lost these, sometimes, but I did not love my Lord any the less. Neither do I love Christ this day because I am free from pain. If I were not free from pain, I would still love Him. Christ has given to some of you a retirement—you have all you need for this world. But is that why you love Christ? Oh, no, Beloved! If He were to take it all away, I know that you would love Him in your poverty! The devil was a liar when he said of Job, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face!"

We do not love God altogether for what He gives us in this world—ours is not such poor cupboard love as that! We love Him because He first loved us and we do not pretend to have climbed to that high state of disinterested love in which there is no gratitude mingled with it. We always must be grateful to Him and love Him for that reason, but still, temporal things never win our heart's love to God. There are numbers of you who

have health, wealth and many other things that so many desire, but they never make *you* love God—and they never will! You love them and make idols of them very readily, but they do not lead you to love the Lord. The children of God who love their dear Savior can tell you that they do not love Him because of what He gives them, for if He takes from them, they love Him all the same! With Job, they say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." They do not love Him simply because He caresses them, for if He chastens them, they still love Him and kiss the rod with which He strikes them!

I meant also to say that *we do not love Christ because of His temporary indulgence of us in spiritual things*. You know, Beloved, our Savior very frequently favors us with manifestations of His Presence. We are overjoyed when He comes very near to us and permits us to put our fingers into the prints of the nails. We have our high days and festivals when the Bridegroom is with us—*emphatically with us*! He takes all the clouds out of our sky and gives us the bright shining of the sun. Or He opens the lattices and shows Himself to us in a way only second to that in which we shall see Him when we behold Him face to face! And oh, how we love Him, then! But, thank God, when He draws the lattice back, again, and hides His face, we do not leave off loving Him because of that.

Our love to our Lord does not depend upon the weather. True, our love is not manifested to Him so sweetly when we are in the dark as when He cheers us with His smile. But still, it is there, all the while. We could not let Him go. "Though He slays me"—though *He* slays me! He who loves me—though He turns to be my enemy and slays me—"yet will I trust in Him." We will hold to Him, still, and love Him, still, not because of the substance of His house, but because of what He, Himself, is! There are times when we are half inclined to say with the elder brother, "These many years have I been with You, privileged to serve You, and yet You have not given me so much as a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Perhaps we have been long without the light of His Countenance and have had no love-tokens from Him. But for all that, we will remain, by His Grace, in His service and abide in His house. And even if our Father should answer us roughly, we will tell Him that He is still our Father!

We do not love Him merely for the substance of His house, but for Himself, and because His Spirit has made love to Him to be an instinct of our *new nature* and has put within us such a principle that we cannot help loving Him! Even if we should be called to pass through terrible trials and adversities—and should have to walk a long time in clouds and darkness—yet we would still love and rejoice in Him!

IV. The last observation I shall have to make upon our text is this—THE LOVE OF SAINTS CANNOT BE BOUGHT OFF FROM CHRIST AT ANY PRICE.

The love of some persons to religion is very cheaply bought and very speedily sold. It is very lamentable to notice the great numbers of persons who are quite content to go and worship God with Christian Brothers and Sisters, and to hear the Gospel preached while they are, them-

selves, poor, or in middling circumstances—but who find, as soon as they have accumulated a little wealth, *that the world has a church of its own* and they must go *there*, "because, you see, everybody goes there! And if you are cut off from Society, where are you?" I have been asked that question, sometimes, and I have replied, "Where are you? Why, where Christ would have you to be—'outside the camp, bearing His reproach.'" But that place of separation, "outside the camp," is a position which is not always taken up cheerfully by professedly Christian people! It is very sorrowful to see how, because God has entrusted them with wealth, they get drawn away from the Gospel and from the Church of God—and though they are troubled a little, at first, they soon get rid of one scruple after another and subside altogether into worldliness!

Well, now, I am not altogether sorry that there is this test in the world. Every good farmer keeps a winnowing fan. Of course, he that is foolish, when he sees a great heap lying on the barn floor, says, "All this is my wheat that I have brought in." He does not want to have it diminished, for it is the result of his labor—but if he is a *wise* farmer, he says, "Though I have brought in a great heap, I know that there is chaff with it," and he is glad to have the winnowing fan used, and the corn tossed up, that the fresh breeze may blow through it. If the mere professors go, let them go! "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."

There are some who go away from Christ's people and renounce religion and love to Christ because of business. *It will pay better in certain lines not to be religious* and, therefore, as the main thing with them is to get money—religiously, if they can, but irreligiously if necessary—therefore, by-and-by they are offended and they sell Christ Jesus! I am pained to see the numbers of persons who go and live in the suburbs of London and who make that an opportunity for selling their religion, such as it is! It is not long ago that I stood at a dying bed and a part of what I heard there was, "O Sir, ten years ago we used to be members of such a church! We came to live out here, but there was no place of worship, handy, so we have not been anywhere." That person was dying without hope, after selling Christ for love of a little country air! That was about all it was, and little more was to be gained by it.

"Oh, but," asks someone, "do saints sell Christ like that?" No, not they—these are only the *professors* who have mingled with the saints! These are like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the children of Israel—howbeit they are not all Israel that are of Israel! The saints sell Christ? No, they are too much like their Master to do that! You remember how Satan took their Master to the top of a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said, "All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me"? Wicked thief! It was not His to give! Yet He tempted Christ in that way, but Jesus answered, "Get you from Me, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." If any of Christ's followers are tempted in the same fashion, let them give the same reply!

All the substance of the devil's house could not win the love of that man who has set His affection on Jesus. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The cruel Romanists have taken the martyrs into the lone dungeon of the Inquisition and tormented them, there, in such a way that it pains us even to read or hear of what they suffered! But did they give up Christ? No, not they! They never would. At other times they have taken the Christians into a palace and said, "We will clothe you in scarlet and fine linen. You shall fare sumptuously every day—but you must give up Christ." Yet they would not! All the substance of this world has been laid at the feet of holy men and women and they have rejected the price with scorn!

I know men, today, and rejoice to know them, who have sacrificed honor and position among men. Who have borne abuse and scorn and have been glad to bear it! They have counted it their privilege that they were not only permitted to have Christ as their Savior, but also that they were allowed to suffer for His sake! Brothers and Sisters, may the Lord so clothe us with the whole armor of righteousness that no temptation may ever be able to wound our love to Jesus! Let us feel, "We can let all else go, but we can never let Him go."—

"If on my face for His dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,

there let them be for His sake! Give me but a vision of the Crucified! Let me see that thorn-crowned brow. Let me but gaze into His dear languid eyes so full of love for me and I will then say, "My Master, through floods or flames, if You shall lead, I'll follow where You go! When the many turn aside, I will still cling to You and witness that You have the living Word, and that there is none upon earth that I desire beside You. I will give up the treasures of Egypt, for I have respect to the recompense of the reward! I will let the ingots of gold go, every one of them, I will cast them into the sea without regret!

"But if You will abide in the vessel, my soul shall be content. Bind me to Your altar, for I am but flesh and blood, and may start aside in the hour of trial. Cast the links of Your love about me—chain me to Yourself—yes, crucify me! Nail me to Your Cross and let me be dead to the world, for then the world will leave off tempting a corpse. Let me be dead with You, for then the world, that cast You out, may cast me out, too, and have done with me. And it were well, then, to be counted as the offscouring of all things for Your dear sake, my Lord!"

If a man should give all the substance of his house to bribe the saints to sell their Lord, it would be utterly despised. By this test shall we prove you, O professors! By this trial shall it be known whether you can stand firm in the evil day. God grant that you may, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—792, 811, 808.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 20:9-16.

Verse 9. *Then He began to speak to the people this parable, A certain man planted a vineyard, and leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time.* It is a long time since Jesus left us and He has not yet returned. Many say that He is coming back very soon. Others say, "The Lord delays His coming."

10-11. *And at the season he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard, but the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him, also, and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.* They grow bolder and more wicked, you see! First beating, and then adding shameful treatment to their former cruelty. Men do not come to ridicule religion and persecute its advocates all at once—this is an art which Satan teaches by degrees.

12. *And again he sent a third: and they wounded him, also, and cast him out.* They are more violent this time. It comes to actual wounding and to casting out the servant.

13. *Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do?* A strange thing happens when the Lord, Himself, comes to a pass and says, "What shall I do?" Here is infinite Wisdom, as it were, at a non-plus. And in that extremity, this is the Lord's last expedient—

13-15. *I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.* You know the story how this beloved Son of the Highest was all love and pity and yet, with cruel hands, men cast Him out of God's ancient vineyard and crucified Him, hoping that they would be allowed to remain lords of God's heritage.

15. *What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do to them?* What punishment can be sufficient to expiate such a crime? What vengeance will be poured out upon those who have killed Him who came to do them good?

16. *He shall come and destroy these vinedressers, and shall give the vineyard to others.* And He did so! He scattered abroad the Jews and gave the Kingdom, for a while, at least, to the Gentiles. And they heard the Gospel which the Jews refused.

16. *And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.* That is exactly what you and I would say, for we, too, have ill-treated the blessed Lord of the vineyard and His beloved Son! Lest we should have the heritage taken from us, let us yield up the fruit to Him who has the best right to it all.

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 AND HIS CO-WORKERS
NO. 2467

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 31, 1896,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 10, 1886.

"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word through accompanying signs. Amen."
Mark 16:20.

THE previous verse tells us that "after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God." It was expedient for His disciples that He should go away and He had gone to the best place for helping them in their work. He could survey the field better from an eminence, so the Captain ascends on high. He could best send to them succor from the Throne, so the Lord ascends to His Glory. He could better lead them by the Holy Spirit than by His own personal bodily Presence, so He was in the best place when, "He was received up into Heaven." The disciples were in their best place on earth. We do not always think so—we are sometimes eager to go Home. We have often thought, concerning a convert, that if the first day it is said of him, "Behold he prays," we could also say, "Behold he sings in Heaven," it would save us a world of care and trouble and disappointment. Yet, all things considered, for the Glory of God and for the working out of the Divine purpose, the saints would not be best if they were immediately received up into Heaven. No, it is better to read concerning them, "They went out and preached everywhere." Christ is best up there, but it is expedient for us and for God's Glory that we should remain a while here.

I like the thought of Christ being taken up to Heaven because *His work* was done and His people being left on earth because there was still work for them to do. If we could steal away to Heaven, what a pity it would be that we should do so while there is a single soul to be saved! I think that if I had not brought to Christ the full number of jewels that He intended me to bring to adorn His crown, I would ask to come back even from Heaven. He knows best where we can best serve Him, so He ordains that while He sits at the right hand of God, we are to abide here and to go forth to preach everywhere, the Lord working with us and confirming the Word with accompanying signs, even as He did with His first disciples.

I am going to say just a few practical words upon the fact, first, that *they worked*—"They went out and preached everywhere." Secondly, *the Lord worked with them*—"the Lord working with them." Thirdly, *the two workings were in delightful harmony*, for when the Lord worked, He confirmed the Word with accompanying signs and, as the writer of this verse has put, "Amen," at the end of it, we will say, "Amen," and feel, "Amen."

Lord, make Your people work! "Amen." Lord, work yourself! "Amen." Lord, make the two workings to be but one sweet monotone after all! "Amen."

I. First, then, THEY WORKED—"They went out and preached."

The disciples did not say, "Well, the Master has gone to Heaven, so the eternal purposes of God will be quite sure to be carried out. It is not possible that the designs of Infinite Love should fail, the more especially as He is at the Father's side, therefore let us enjoy ourselves spiritually. Let us sit down in the happy possession of Covenant blessings and let us sing to our hearts' content because of all that God has done for us and given to us. He will effect His own purposes and we have only to stand still and see the salvation of God." No, Brothers, it was not for them to judge what they ought to do. When they were told to tarry at Jerusalem, they tarried at Jerusalem. There are times of tarrying, but, inasmuch as the Master had commanded them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, they also, when the hour had struck, went into all the world and began to preach *everywhere* the Gospel they had learned at Jesus' feet! It is not for us to judge what would seem most reasonable, much less what would be most comfortable—it is for us to do *as* we are told, *when* we are told and *because* we are told, for are we not servants and not masters? It is not wise to map out the proceedings even of a single day, but to take our cue from Him who is our Guide and Leader, and to follow Him in all things.

I would like you to notice concerning the working of these disciples that *all of them* worked. "*They* went out and preached everywhere." They might not all formally preach—some of them might not feel that they could stand before a large assembly—but they all actually preached in the sense of proclaiming, announcing, delivering the Truth of God before witnesses. The women were as good witnesses as the men, for some of them had seen more than the men had! They beheld the risen Lord even before the very first of the Apostles beheld Him and, inasmuch as they could all bear witness to the fact that He was risen from the dead, their duty was to go and tell the news that He who had been crucified in weakness had been raised in power and was now to be proclaimed as the Savior of men, that, "whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "They went forth," not merely some of them, but *all* of them.

Next, notice that this work of the disciples was *aggressive*—"they went *forth*." Some of them were bound to stay for a while at Jerusalem though that old nest was eventually pulled down—not a stick of it was left and the very tree on which it was built was cut down. Persecution drove forth the bulk of them further and further. We do not know where they all went. There are *traditions*, which are not very valuable, to show where each of the *Apostles* went, but it is quite certain that they all went somewhere or other. Starting from the one common center, they went in various directions preaching Christ. I think a strong Church is a very valuable institution, but I have always deprecated the idea that all of you should sit here, Sunday after Sunday, and listen to me. And I have spoken to some of you to such purpose that I do not often see you now. Nor do I *want* to see you, because I know you are serving the Master else-

where. There are some of our Brothers and Sisters who only come here to the Communion Table—why? Because they are always at work for Christ in some way or other. They are the best members we have and we shall not cross their names off the roll because they are not in attendance! They are at work in some mission station, or trying to open a new room for preaching, or doing something or other for the Master. The Lord bless them!

I do not want you all to go out at one time, but I do want you all to feel that it is not the end, though it may be the beginning, of Christian life to come and hear sermons! Scatter as widely as you can the blessing which you get for yourself—the moment you find the Light of God and realize that the world is in the dark, run away with your match and lend somebody else a light! Be glad of the Light, yourself, but, depend upon it, if God gives you a candle and all you do is lock yourself up in a room and sit down and say, "Sweet light! Sweet light! I have got the light while all the world is in the dark! Sweet, sweet light!" your candle will soon burn out and you, also, will be in the dark! But if you go to others and say, "I shall have none the less light because I give some to you," by this means God the Holy Spirit will pour upon you fresh beams of light and you shall shine brighter and brighter even to the perfect day.

"They went forth." Oh, that some people I know of could have their chapels burnt down! They have been stuck in a hole down a back street for the last hundred years! They are good souls and so they ought to be—they ought to be matured by now after so much storage—but if they would only go out in the street, they might do much more good than at present. "Oh, but there is an old deacon who does not like street-preaching!" I know him very well! He will be gone to Heaven soon. Then, as soon as you have had his funeral sermon, turn out into the street and begin, somehow or other, to make Christ known! Oh, to break down every barrier and get rid of every restraint that hides the blessed Gospel! Perhaps we must respect these dear old Believers' feelings just a little, but not so much as to let souls die! We must seek to bring sinners to Jesus whether we offend men or whether we please them!

Then notice, dear Friends, that these disciples went forth *promptly*, for though there is not a word, here, about the *time*, yet it is implied that as soon as the hour had struck and the Holy Spirit had descended from Christ, and rested upon them, "they went out and preached the Word everywhere." Alas, too often we are "going" to do something! If about a tenth part of what we are going to do were only done, how much more might be accomplished! "They went forth." They did not *talk* about going forth, but, "they went forth." They did not wait until they received directions from the Apostles where they were to go, but Providence guided each man and each man went his own way, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You believe the Gospel. You believe that men are perishing for lack of it. Therefore, I pray you, do not stop to consider, do not wait to deliberate any longer! The best way to spread the Gospel is to spread the Gospel. I believe the best way of defending the Gospel is to spread the Gospel! I was addressing a number of students, the other day, upon the apologies for the Gospel which are so numerous just now. A great many learned

men are *defending* the Gospel—no doubt it is a very proper and right thing to do—yet I always notice that when there are most books of that kind, it is because the Gospel, itself, is not being preached. Suppose a number of persons were to take it into their heads that they had to defend a lion, a full-grown king of beasts! There he is in a cage and here come all the soldiers of the army to fight for him. Well, I would suggest to them, if they would not object and feel that it was humbling to them, that they should kindly stand back, open the door, and let the lion out! I believe that would be the best way of defending him, for he would take care of himself—and the best "apology" for the Gospel is to let the Gospel out! Never mind about defending Deuteronomy or the whole of the Pentateuch—preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified! Let the Lion out and see who will dare to approach Him! The Lion of the tribe of Judah will soon drive away all His adversaries! This was how Christ's first disciples worked—they preached Jesus Christ wherever they went! They did not stop to apologize, but boldly bore their witness concerning Him.

Note, once more, that they served their Master *obediently*—"They went out and preached." Suppose they had gone out and had "a service of song"? Suppose they had gone out and held a meeting that was partly comic, with just a little bit of a moral tacked on to the end of it? We would have been in the darkness of heathendom to the present day! There is nothing that is really of any service for the spreading of the Gospel but preaching! I mean, by *preaching*, as I have already said—not merely the standing up in a pulpit and delivering a set discourse, but *talking about Christ*—talking about Him as risen from the dead, as the Judge of the quick and dead, as the great atoning Sacrifice, the one Mediator between God and men. It is by preaching Jesus Christ that sinners are saved! "It pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe." Whatever may be said outside the Bible about preaching, you have only to turn to the Word of God, itself, to find what a Divine ordinance it is and to see how the Lord makes that to be the main means of the salvation of men. Keep on with it, my Brothers. This is the gun that will win the battle, though many have tried to silence it. They have had all sorts of new inventions and contrivances, but when all their inventions shall have had their day and proved futile, depend upon it, the proclaiming of Jesus Christ's name, Gospel and work among mankind will be found to be effectual when all things else have failed!

"They went forth and preached." It is not said that they went forth and argued, or that they went out and wrote apologies for the Christian faith. No, they went out and *proclaimed*—told out the Truth of God as a Revelation from God! In the name of Christ they *demanded* that men should believe in Him—and left them, if they would not believe—with this distinct understanding, that they would perish in their unbelief! They wept over them and pleaded with them to believe in Jesus. And they felt sure that whoever did believe in Him would find eternal life through His name. This is what the whole Church of Christ should do, and do at once—and keep on doing with all its might—even until the end of the age!

There is only one more word left, and that is this very wide word, "*everywhere*." One of our great writers, in a very amusing letter which he has written to a person who had asked for a contribution towards the re-

moval of a chapel debt, wants to know whether we cannot preach Christ behind hedges and in ditches. Of course we can, and we must do so, provided it does not rain too hard. Can we not preach Jesus Christ at a street corner? Of course we can! And many of our friends will be preaching at the corners of the streets after this service is over. Yet in such a climate as ours, we often need buildings in which we can worship God, but we must never get into the idea of confining our preaching to the building. "They went out and preached everywhere."

Mr. John Wesley, as you know, was complained of for not keeping to his parish, but he insisted that he did, for all the world was his parish—and all the world is every man's parish! Do good everywhere, wherever you may be. Some of you are going to the seaside for a holiday—do not go without a good stock of tracts, and do not go without seeking an opportunity, when you are sitting on the sands, to talk to people about the Lord Jesus Christ! There used to sit, in this left-hand gallery, a man who brought many persons, in the course of the year, whose conversion, under God, was due to him and to me. He had nothing particular to do except to go and sit down on a seat in Hyde Park and there talk with ladies and gentlemen who came and sat there. He would tell them that he had a pew at the Tabernacle and he would lend them his ticket, so that they might have a comfortable place. And then he took care, after the sermon, to talk to them about Christ. And this Church has in it, now, some excellent members whom that good Brother brought to the Savior in that way. He said, "I cannot, myself, preach, but I can *bring people* to hear my minister, and I can pray God to bless them when they come."

Only this week I saw another Brother, who leaves his home at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning. There are, or there were, members of this Church who walked 12 miles every Sunday morning to hear the Gospel here, and walked back to their homes at night. This Brother lives a long way from here and he starts at 8 o'clock in the morning and puts one of my sermons into each of the letter-boxes in a certain district as he comes along. So he utilizes a long walk and, in the course of the year, circulates many thousands of sermons! What a capital way he has found of spending Sunday morning! When he gets here, after having done that service for his Lord, he enjoys the Gospel all the better because of what he has, himself, done in making it known to others!

Oh, Beloved, it is sweet to think that Christ is preached in the workhouse, or in the infirmary and to remember that the poor and the sick are not left without the Gospel! Let Christ be preached in the darkest slum, in the worst house that there may be in this neighborhood, and God knows that there are no worse houses than we have all round about us in this region! Oh, that Christ were talked of everywhere, to ones, and twos, and half-dozens, till the whole district should be saturated with blessed testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ! No place is so bad that we may not preach Christ—and no place is so good that it does not need to hear of Jesus!

II. I have taken too much time on that first division—*they worked*. So now we must turn to the second point, which is that THE LORD WORKED WITH THEM. That was the very root of the matter—"the Lord working with them."

Is not this *wonderful condescension?* You remember the passage in which we are said to be laborers together with God? Is it not gracious and kind on the Lord's part to let us come and work with Him? Yet it seems to my mind more condescending for God to come and work with us, because ours is such poor, feeble, imperfect service! Yet so He does—"the Lord working with them." The Lord is working with that dear Sister who, when she takes her class, feels that she is quite unfit for it, and with that Brother who, when he preaches, thinks that it is not preaching at all and is half inclined never to try again. Oh, yes, "the Lord working with them," such as they were—fishermen, humble women and the like! This was wonderful condescension!

In those days the Lord worked with them by *miracles*. These miracles called attention to the Gospel and they also proved that God was with the preachers. Men need, sometimes, proofs of the existence of God and of His Presence with His servants. So these first disciples were entrusted with miraculous powers.

Besides all this, God was working at that time very wonderfully by *Providence*. The whole world was evidently just ready for the advent of Christianity. From Caesar's throne down to the slave who worked at the mill, everybody seemed to be in a condition of preparation for the Gospel! The general state of society was such that all were expecting great changes and thus, God was working with the disciples when they went out and preached everywhere.

And, above all, *the Holy Spirit was with them* and that is the point I am now going to dwell upon, because that is what we need most of all. The Holy Spirit made what they said to be Divinely powerful! However feebly they uttered it, according to the judgment of men, there was an inward secret power that went with their utterances and compelled the hearts of men to accept the blessed summons of God and, dear Friends, I believe that when we are seeking to serve Christ, we little know how often God is working with us very wonderfully! I had an instance of that only this week. I will not mention the place, but there was a certain district of which I heard that there was great need of the Gospel and that there were many people in that district who were as ignorant of the way of salvation as Hottentots. And the various places of worship seemed to affect a very small proportion of the people.

A Brother visited the neighborhood for me and I prayed very earnestly that his visits might be blessed. It is a very curious thing that while I was thinking about that district, there were certain Christian people close to it who were thinking about me—and longing for the Gospel to be carried to their neighbors! And after I had moved ever so little in the matter, I received a letter from them saying how much they needed somebody to come and labor for the Lord among them. I said to myself, "This is strange. I have known this district for years, yet I have never noticed that anybody wanted me or my message. But the moment I begin to move towards the people, they begin to move towards me." You do not know, my Brother, that you may not have a similar story to tell! There is that street you feel moved to go and work in—God has been there before you! Do you not remember how, when His children had to go and destroy the Canaanites, the Lord sent the hornet before them? Now, when you have to

go and preach to sinners, God sends some preparatory work before you, He is sure to do so!

When people come into the place of worship to hear the Gospel, if a man is preaching it in earnest, God works upon them to make them ready before they come. And something they thought of on the road, or some sickness they have had, or a death bed scene they have witnessed, or some movement of conscience awakened, perhaps, before they get into the building, renders them ready to receive the Gospel of the Grace of God! The Lord works with us, my Brothers! We always have a picked congregation—whoever comes! Some come who never thought of coming, but the right people come—and often they come in the right state of mind because they have been prepared by God's Spirit for the message they are to hear!

Some do not come in that way, but God works with the minister while he is preaching. If he does not take his sermon and read it, he is guided by God in what to say. He says the right thing, though perhaps it never occurred to him till the moment he utters it. And it tallies so exactly with what is going on in the mind that he is addressing, it fits so wonderfully that often, after a sermon, a person has said, "Somebody told the preacher all about me." It has frequently been my lot in the vestry after service to have persons demand of me who had told me about them—persons whom I had never seen or heard of till that moment! The preacher's word is blessed to them because God is working while the sermon is being delivered and they are made to receive the Truth of God!

In other cases God works afterwards. Sometimes, *immediately* afterwards—at other times, *years* afterwards. There are different sorts of seeds in the world. The seeds of some plants and trees, unless they undergo a peculiar process, will not grow for years. There is something about them which preserves them intact for a long time, but in due season the life-germ shoots forth. And there are certain kinds of men who do not catch the Truth at the time it is uttered—it lies hidden away in their souls till, one day, under peculiar circumstances, they remember what they heard—and it begins to affect their hearts.

Dear Friends, if we work and God works with us, what is there that we may not expect? Therefore I put it to you that the great need of any working Church is for God to work with them and, therefore, this ought to be our daily confession, that we need God to work with us. We must always realize that we are nothing apart from His working. We must not pretend to compliment the Holy Spirit by now and then talking about Him, as though it were the proper thing to say that of course the Holy Spirit must work! It must be a downright matter of fact with us that the Holy Spirit must work, as much as it would be with a sailor that his sails could not go round without the wind. And then we must act as the sailor does—he sets his sails and tries to catch the wind from whatever quarter it blows. And we must try to work in such a way that the Holy Spirit is likely to bless us. I do not think the Holy Spirit will bless some service that is done even by well-meaning people, because if He did, it would seem as if He had set His seal to a great deal that was not according to the mind of the Lord. Let us so act, dear Brothers and Sisters, in our work, that there is never the smudge of a dirty thumb across the page—nothing of pride,

or self-seeking, or hot-headedness—but that all is done humbly, dependently, hopefully and always in a holy and gracious spirit, so that we may respect the Holy Spirit to acknowledge and bless it That will, of course, involve that everything must be done *prayerfully*, for our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And we must *ask* for this greatest of blessings—that God the Holy Spirit may work with our work.

Then we must *believe* in the Holy Spirit and believe to the highest degree, so as never to be discouraged or think anything difficult. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Can anything be difficult to the Holy Spirit? It is a grand thing to often get into deep water so as to be obliged to swim! But we like to keep our feet touching the sand. What a mercy it is to feel that you cannot do *anything*, for then you *must* trust in God and God alone—and feel that He is quite equal to any emergency! Thus trusting and thus doing His bidding, we shall not fail. Come, Holy Spirit, and work, now, with all Your people! Come and awaken us to work and when we are bestirred to a holy energy, then work with us! Eternal arm that never wearies, to which nothing can be difficult, be stretched out to work with Your Church at this time to Your own praise!

III. Finally, Brothers, and very briefly, THE TWO WORKINGS ARE IN HARMONY. They are really one, they blend, they unite—"God working with them, and confirming the Word through accompanying signs."

I get a little afraid of some people who say very glibly, "The Lord told me this, the Lord told me that." You had better mind where that notion may lead you because what God has to say He has already said in the Bible! You will find that anything which comes to you with power and is really His Truth, is here in the Book. We do not get new Revelations nowadays—we shall get all kinds of fanaticisms and follies if we expect such Revelations! For instance, a man meets me at the bottom of the stairs and he says that God has revealed to him that he is to preach here one Sunday. I say, "I do not believe the Lord has revealed anything of the kind! At any rate, He has not revealed to *me* that I am to let you preach, and I shall not let you till He does." I do not believe in lopsided Revelations, but there are numbers of people led into all sorts of extravagances by the notion that the Lord has spoken this and that to them. What God does is not to give us a *new* Word, but to confirm the Word that He has already given. That which He has revealed is for us to speak out and God, in *His working*, will confirm the Word that He has given.

The harmony of the two workings is manifested thus—*the first working springs out of the second*. No man really goes and preaches Christ without being moved by the Spirit of God to do it. It is the Spirit of God who taught us about Christ and all that we can preach that is worth preaching, comes of the Holy Spirit in that very act!

Then, secondly, *the first implies the second*. No man who truly preaches Christ can do it except by the Holy Spirit and, in his ministry he must teach the necessity of the working of the Holy Spirit. "You must be born again, and born again of the Holy Spirit," must be his constant cry.

So the first of the two workings implies the second and then, next, *the second confirms the first*, that which we have taught out of God's Word,

God, the Holy Spirit, bears witness in the understanding and conscience of men that this is the very Truth of God.

And, finally, *the second is promised to the first*. Where we work, God will work with us. It is not as some put it, "Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but only God can give the increase." There is no such text as that in the Bible, nor anything like it! Paul's testimony is, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." And when *we plant* and *we water*, the increase will come! It is not God who is tardy, it is we who are tardy! If we had but faith as a grain of mustard seed, we would not find that God would fail that faith. And when we get the faith which can move mountains, we shall not find that God's Omnipotence has evaporated and that our faith has outrun His power! Believe that, my Brother, and labor on the strength of that belief. Believe that, my Sister, and speak of Christ, for, in doing so you *cannot*, you *shall not fail*!

Perhaps for the moment you may seem to do so, but in the long run—and God can afford to wait, remember, though you *think* you cannot—in the long run there was never a lost testimony, never a Word of God that returned to Him void. The snowflakes fall into the sea—are they not gone? Not *one* of them, for they help to feed the mighty deep! The showers fall on the wilderness—are they not lost? If they drop on the sand of the Sahara? Not a *drop* of them, for they shall be evaporated and used somewhere else! See, they come up in clouds and, at length, they fall where God has ordained. If the Lord is working with you, you cannot fail, you shall not fail! Only keep on working, relying on God to help you and looking up to the Lord to work with you.

O poor Sinners, all this sermon is about you! Our wish is to see you saved! Our prayer is that you may be brought to Christ! Oh, that you were as willing to come as we would be to lead you to the Savior—as willing to come as God is to receive you! Come and try Him, now, and you shall praise Him forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 16.

Verse 1. *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.* We know that, "Him," whose name is not given here. There is scarcely need to mention that it was Jesus whom the women came to anoint. Oh, how gladly would we also anoint "Him" whose name is The Anointed One! But not as a *dead* Christ, for, "He is risen!" Our sweet spices must henceforth be for that Living One whom we anoint with our living joy and consecration! Or, rather, we must receive our anointing from Him, for He is the Christ and we the Christians who get our very name and life from Him! As He was supposed to be dead and still lying in the tomb, these holy women came to anoint Him.

2. *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, at the rising of the sun they came to the sepulcher.* We often lose a great blessing by not rising early for devotion. While yet the flowers are wet with dew, it were well if our souls had the dew of Heaven resting upon them.

3, 4. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us? And when they looked, they saw*

that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. Which was, I suppose, the reason for their thinking about the stone. But still, I cannot help reading it as a *reason* why it was rolled away. At all events, this was the argument that David used when he prayed, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." As if the greatness of the sin had in it some reason for pardon. So the greatness of the care may be some reason why we might expect a great God to come to our relief. It was a very great stone, therefore God, who knew that poor feeble women could not move it, had it rolled away Himself.

5, 6. *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. And he said to them, Be not frightened.* They were afraid of an angel. "Conscience does make cowards of us all" and even good men and good women are apt to be afraid of anything celestial and bright. The angel said to the women, "Be not frightened"—

6**, 7.** *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 to you.* Does not that last clause drop out very sweetly? Yet there is somewhat of a rebuke in it—"as He said to you." "Did He not tell you that He would rise from the dead? Did He not say that He would meet you in Galilee?" And the day shall come, Beloved, when you, also, shall rejoice in your Deliverer and your deliverance! And you shall not wonder so much, then, as you do, now, for you shall see that the deliverance was what you ought to have expected—"as He said to you." Poor seeking Sinner, if you have found the Savior, you are full of amazement, but the day will come when you will see it in another light—you will be equally grateful, but you will say—"I ought to have had faith to expect this, as He said to me." It will always be so. Just as God says, so it is—in creation, in Providence, in Grace—and as He has said to you, so shall it be in your spiritual experience.

8. *And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.* There was no reason in Christ's Resurrection for anything but delight, yet these dear women were overwhelmed, silenced, struck dumb by that which made the angels sing!

9. *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.* It has been a general tradition in the Church of Christ that Mary Magdalene was a great sinner. I do not feel sure that she was, but still, she is the *type* of a great sinner. The seven devils that were in her do not represent actual guilt on her part, but they depict or symbolize the subjection of her nature to the power of Satan. It is very beautiful to notice that those people for whom Christ does most, He seems to love best. Yet this is also according to human nature, for if there is a child in the family that the mother loves most, it is the one that was the hardest to bring up and who has cost her most of care and most of labor! The casting out of seven devils endears the Magdalene to Christ and, first of all, He appears to her. Besides, she loved much, doubtless, and she was quick of sight, so she saw Him first. O my Soul, if you have been a great sinner, do not

take any place but that of first in love and first in fellowship with Christ! Be content to be nothing, but be anxious to make Him your All in All.

10. *And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.* It is a curious "interior" that Mark here sketches, or rather stipples, with just a few touches. There are most of Christ's disciples who had been with Him—sitting, mourning and weeping over His death! And in comes Mary and says that she has seen Him alive.

11. *And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.* This was both cruel to the Magdalene and forgetful of their Master's Words, but unbelief is a very cruel thing. It is not only grievous to ourselves, but it acts in a shameful manner to Christian Brothers and Sisters and, worst of all, is its treatment of our Divine Master, Himself. It says that He is dead when truly He is alive. Unbelief has no good in it—it is altogether evil, only evil, and that continually. The Lord deliver us from it!

12-13. *After that He appeared in another form to two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it to the residue: neither believed they them.* It is very hard to kill unbelief. It has more lives than a cat is supposed to possess. There is no end to it and if men sit down and indulge in it, and look upon it as an infirmity, or as a painful trial—instead of regarding it as an abominable sin against the Lord—they are likely to sink deeper and deeper into this horrible mire!

14. *Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart*—Christ is full of love to them, yet He must upbraid them. He loves them, but He loves not their unbelief! No, He is more vexed with unbelief in them than in other people.

14, 15. *Because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said to them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* That commission of our Lord makes me smile, for it seems such a curious cure for unbelief, yet I have proved the usefulness of it many a time! There have I been, sitting down, fretting and worrying, and my Master, instead of giving me some gracious promise, that I might sit there by myself and enjoy its sweetness, has said, "Up with you! Go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Those who preach most, if they preach with all their hearts, will believe most, and they will grow strong enough to tread their doubts beneath their feet. So ought it to be. In the lives of those who have brought many to Christ, I do not, as a rule, read long chapters about their doubts and fears. No, but God encourages them by the signs and seals which He gives them. They see His hand with them, they mark how the Lord works with them and by them, and they forget their unbelief. Does not this passage seem to run so? "He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said to them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

16. *He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.* This is a weighty message for us to carry—and we have need to carry it with due solemnity, with our hearts on fire with love.

17, 18. *And these signs shall follow them that believe, In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* The Apostles and the early Christians had these miraculous signs. There is no need that they should be given again. The seal was set upon the Gospel at the first. A man buys a house and on the first day when he takes possession, he gets the signature of the seller and the legal seal upon the conveyance. That matter is done. If he ever doubts his right to the property, he can always look back to that seal. He does not need a fresh lot of sealing wax every five minutes! Neither do we need continual miracles. The Church of Christ, at first, was like a ship going to sea—the tug takes her out of the harbor, but when she is fairly out at sea, she does not need the tug any longer—she is dependent, then, upon the wind from Heaven and so she speeds on her way! Or, the Church is like a young tree newly planted in the orchard—it has a stake stuck in the ground by the side of it, to which it is tied. But when it grows into a strong tree, where is the stake? The tree does not require it, for it stands fast by other means! It is just so with us and the miracles which were needed at the first.

19. *So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.* The disciples were not at once received up into Heaven, though they might have been if God had so willed it. There was work for them to do here below, so Christ, alone, "was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God." And as for His followers—

20. *And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word through accompanying signs. Amen.* These last verses of Mark's Gospel have, as some of you know, been questioned as to their Inspiration and authenticity, but they are so like Mark that you cannot read them without feeling that they are part and parcel of what the Evangelist wrote. Set any critic you please to work and if he knows the idiom and style of Mark's writing, he will be bound to say that this is part of the Gospel according to Mark. And God the Holy Spirit, blessing these words to our hearts, as I trust He will, will set His seal to what we believe and know to be His Inspired Word.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—45 (VERSION I), 968, 972.

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SOLITUDE, SILENCE, SUBMISSION
NO. 2468

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 7, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1886.

"He sits alone and keeps silent, because He has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope."
Lamentations 3:28, 29.

THUS the Prophet describes the conduct of a person in deep anguish of heart. When he does not know what to do, his soul, as if by instinct, humbles itself. He gets into some secret place, he utters no speech, he gives himself over to moaning and to tears, and then he bows himself lower and yet lower before the Divine Majesty, as if he felt that the only hope for him in the extremity of his sorrow was to make complete submission to God and to lie in the very dust before Him.

It seems to me that such conduct as this, which is characteristic of every truly gracious man in his hour of trouble, should also be the mark of all who are seeking God's Grace—those who are not yet saved, but who are conscious of their need of salvation. I must, surely, be speaking right into the heart of some who are feeling the crushing weight and heavy burden of their guilt. If you cannot do anything else, dear Friends, do what these two verses say, in order that, afterwards, you may be able to take that grand Gospel step of faith in Jesus Christ which will certainly bring you into peace and joy!

Those of you who have the Revised Version will notice a correction which has been made long ago by all competent scholars—"*Let him* sit alone and keep silent, because He has laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." It does not matter which way you read the passage, because the conduct of one gracious man is virtually a precept to another, yet it is satisfactory to find that if we are under the burden of sin, we are here *commanded* to do as the Prophet did in his time of need.

My objective, just now, is to explain this line of conduct, in the hope that some who are in trouble will at once heartily follow it.

I. First, then, observe that in the time of great trouble, HOLY SOLITUDE is commended to us—"Let him sit alone."

I earnestly advise you who are under concern of soul to seek to get alone and to be quiet and thoughtful in your solitude—not merely to be *alone*, but to sit by yourself like a person in the posture of thought. When a soul is under a deep sense of sin, the more it can be alone, the better. That sense of sin will be increased by the loneliness and when it becomes

intolerable, it is highly probable that in that loneliness the way of its removal will be discovered. In this age we all live too much in company—and in a great city like this, we are busy from morning to night, and we do not get the opportunities for quiet reflection which our forefathers were known to take. I am afraid, therefore, that our religion is likely to become very superficial and flimsy for the lack of solitary, earnest thought. Men, nowadays, usually go in flocks—someone leads the way and the rest follow him like sheep that rush through a gap in the hedge! It would be better for us if we deliberated more, if we used our own judgment, if we drew near to God in our own personality and were resolved that whatever others might do, we would seek to be personally guided by the Lord Himself.

I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may *well study your case as in the sight of God*. Few men truly know themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a mirror, but there is another mirror which gives *true* reflections, into which few men look. To study one's own self in the light of God's Word and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins—and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures—would be a very healthy exercise. But how very few care to go through it! Yet, beloved Friends, if it is a wise thing to look well to your business, how much more ought you to look to the business which concerns your immortal souls!

If a true shepherd will not neglect his flocks and his herds, should not a wise man care about his thoughts, his feelings and his actions? Must it not be a wretched condition not to know whether one is saved or not? I sometimes hear people express surprise if they are asked whether they are saved—yet in what ignorance of your own soul's state must you be if you have never put that question to yourself, or if, when it *is* put, you feel inclined to give no answer to it! I press this matter home upon you and if you would be saved, you must first know that you are lost! If you would seek to be healed, you must first learn that you are sick! It is not possible that you will repent unless you are aware of your sin. It is not likely that you will look to Christ unless you first know *what* it is for which you are to look to Him!

Therefore, I pray you, set apart some time *every day*, or at least some time as often as you can get it, in which the business of your mind shall be to take your longitude and latitude, that you may know exactly where you are. You may be drifting towards the rocks and you may be wrecked before you know your danger. I implore you, do not let your ship go at full steam through a fog, but slacken speed a bit and heave the lead to see whether you are in deep waters or shallow. I am not asking you to do more than any kind and wise man would advise you to do. Do I even ask you more than your own conscience tells you is right? Sit alone a while, that you may carefully consider your case.

Get alone, again, dear Friend—especially dear *young* Friend—that you may *diligently search the Scriptures*. I am often astounded at the igno-

rance there still is of what is written in God's Word! Many persons who have even been in Sunday schools for years seem to be totally unaware of the most plain Truths of the Gospel of God's Grace! How can we know what is revealed unless we read and study it for ourselves? Alas, the dust upon many men's Bibles will condemn them! God has been pleased, in this Book, to give us the revelation of the way of salvation and we ought to rush to the Book with eager anxiety to know what God has said in it! But instead of doing so, though we can get a Bible for sixpence and, perhaps, have a copy in every room in our house, how little do we read it! If you truly desire to be saved, get alone for the earnest and hearty study of the Word of God!

How often you may meet with persons who profess to be infidels, yet if you press them closely enough, you will find that they have never even read the New Testament through! There are many more who are in doubt and anxiety, yet they have never gone to see what are the promises of God and what the Lord is ready to do for them that seek Him. I beseech you, as sensible and reasonable beings, do not let God speak to you and refuse to hear! You need to be saved from sin! In this Book God has revealed the way of salvation, therefore do not shut up the Book, fasten the clasps and leave it neglected. Oh, Book of books, the map of the way to Glory! That man invokes a terrible curse upon his own head who refuses to study you! He does, in effect, shut the gate of Heaven against himself and bar the road to everlasting bliss! If you would be saved, dear Friend, sit alone, consider your case and then study God's thoughts concerning it.

Get alone, further, that you may *commune with your God*. After we have once learned the way, we can commune with God *anywhere*—amidst the roar and turmoil of the crowded city, or on the top of the mast of a ship—but, to begin with, it is best to be alone with the Lord. My dear Hearer, have you ever spoken to God in all your life? Have you ever realized that there is such a King in the room with you? There is such a King! It is He who made you and who has preserved you up to this good hour! You are, surely, not prepared to deny His existence? And if you are not, I beseech you, do not ignore that existence and live as if there were no God! Oh, speak with Him at once! Perhaps five minutes' earnest speech with Him may be the turning point of your life. "I will arise and go to my father," was the turning point with the prodigal—and it may be the same with you.

"Oh, but I feel so guilty!" Then get alone and say that to the Lord! "But I do not feel as I ought." Then get alone and tell that to God. "Oh, but I—I am such an unbelieving being!" Get alone and tell out all the truth to the Lord—do not entertain a thought or a feeling which you dare not tell Him. Do not *imagine* that you can hide anything from Him, for He reads your inmost heart. Then take that heart and lay it bare before Him and say with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." As one of God's creatures, I could not

bear to think that I had seen the glory of the midnight stars, or warmed myself in the brightness of the noonday sun and yet had never spoken to Him who made them all and myself as well! One of our sweetest joys on earth is to speak with Him in prayer and praise, to call Him, Friend, and to be on terms of sweet familiarity with the Most High. I do pray you, then, get alone for these three purposes, first, to consider your case. Next, to study the Scriptures concerning your case And then that you may speak with God in prayer.

Get alone, also, for one more reason, and that is that you may avoid *distraction*. I think that, on the Lord's Day, when people go home, after service, they sometimes make a mistake in talking with those who do not feel as they feel. If the arrows of God have entered your heart, go home *alone*. If there has been *anything* in the sermon which has been for your comfort as a Christian, go home *alone*. If there was anything in the sermon which has been for your warning as a sinner, go home *alone*. How often may even godly and gracious people talk upon some theme that may rob their fellow-Believers of all the good they have received in God's House and, as for unconverted persons, I am sure that if they ever feel impressed under the Word, it will be their utmost wisdom to take care of that first impression—and not let it be driven away by foolish or frivolous conversation.

Some of us are old enough to remember the day before there were matches of the kind we now use. And early on a frosty morning some of us have tried to strike a light with flint and steel, and the old-fashioned tinderbox. How long we struck, and struck, and watched, and waited and, at last, there was a little spark in the tinder! And then we would hold the box up and blow on it very softly, that we might keep that little spark alight till we had kindled the fire that we needed. That tenderness over the first spark is what I invite everyone to practice in spiritual matters! If you would be saved—if there is anything like feeling in your heart, if there is any good desire in your soul, do not begin to talk as soon as you get out of the Tabernacle—that would be like placing the lid on the tinder and putting the spark out! But get alone, blow on that spark, for perhaps it may come to a flame and you may find salvation! I advise all persons under sorrow of soul, somehow or other to break right away from their companions! When the day's work is done, let them, each one, say to themselves, "I am not going out with that frivolous person, nor shall I sit in the house with those who will be talking of trifling matters. I have a soul that needs salvation and I must have my soul saved *now*. I cannot afford to be in this giddy company."

"Let him sit alone." That is good advice which the Prophet gives in the text—and I desire to press it upon every awakened person who desires to find the Savior!

II. The text goes on to say, in the next place, that we should practice SUBMISSIVE SILENCE—"Let him sit alone and keep silent."

In what respects should seeking souls keep silent? I answer, first, if the burden of sin is pressing upon you, be sure to abstain from all idle

talk, for if the idle talk of others, as I have reminded you, can distract your thoughts, how much more would your own! It ill becomes a man, who is on the brink of Hell, to be laughing and jesting! When God is angry with you, can you make mirth? I can understand how you can be merry when once you have come back to the great Father's House and the fatted calf is killed and your Father rejoices over you. But while you are still covered with your sins and are not yet sure of God's forgiveness, sit silent! It is the best thing you can do—quietness becomes you. Lay your finger on your lips till you have something better to speak of than you have as yet. Keep silent, then, from all idle talk.

Keep silent, also, in another respect. Do not attempt to make any *excuse for your sin*. Oh, how ready sinners are with their excuses! A man says, "But, Sir, I have a besetting sin." Do you not think that a great many people make a mistake about besetting sins? There was a man who used to get drunk and he said that it was his besetting sin. But his brother said, "No, Sam, it is your *up*setting sin!" And so it was. If I were to go, tonight, across Clapham Common and half-a-dozen men were to surround me and rob me of my wallet, then I should be beset. But if I were to *know* that there were thieves there, and yet I walked across the common on purpose to meet with them, you could not say that they had beset me—you would say that I was a fool to walk into their hands! The besetting sin is that which a man fights against and wars against with all his soul, yet is overcome by it. Do not lay any stress upon that, as though your being beset by sin was any excuse to you, especially if you go into the ways of sin.

You go and sit with those who drink and then wonder that you get drunk? You go and associate with those who swear or sing lewd songs and then you wonder that, the next time you try to pray, a nasty verse of a bad song comes up? It is your own fault if you go and willfully mingle with sinners! How can you be a child of God? No, when you know that anything is a sin, stay away from the temptation! He that does not want to get wet should not go out into the rain. Instead of your excuse making your case any better, it makes it worse! Therefore, keep silent before your God.

And next, keep silent from all *complaining of God*. No man is truly saved while he sets himself up as the judge of God, yet this is the practice of many men. If you give them the Word of God, they begin to pull it to pieces! They ask, "Is God so severe that He will mark our faults? Does He take notice, even, of our evil *thoughts*? Can it really be true that for every idle *word* that a man shall speak, he will have to give an account in the Day of Judgment?" And then, after judging God to be too strict and harsh in His dealings with poor fallible flesh and blood, they go on to snatch from His hand the balance and the rod and sit upon their little throne—and dare to question the decrees of the great Judge of All! "It would be wrong," they say, "to cast men into Hell and to punish with eternal wrath the sins of a short life!" And then they begin to traverse all the teaching of Scripture and to quibble with this and object to that! O

Sirs, if you would be saved, you must give up this wickedness! This kind of conduct will damn you as surely as you live!

When prisoners are tried by an earthly judge and are condemned to die, if they are permitted to speak, they can have no hope of obtaining mercy by criticizing the judge and questioning the law! Of course they are not guilty, poor innocents! "It is the harsh law," they say, "that is to blame." But the law must maintain its majesty against such quibblers and it cannot stoop to mercy, or sheath its sword while a man is in that humor! So, Sinner, sit alone and keep silent. Presume not to judge your God! Behold, He comes with clouds! The trumpet will soon proclaim His appearing and they who were so free to judge their Maker will cry in another tone when that great day has, at last, come! With the earth reeling beneath their feet and the heavens, themselves, on fire, they will beg the rocks to fall on them and the hills to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne—and from the wrath of the Lamb! Go, you guilty one! Sit still and hold your tongue—and bring your rebellious heart to submission! Shall the flax contend with the fire, or the stubble fight with the flame? What can you do in warring with your Maker?

Sit alone and keep silent, next, from all *claims of merit*. I know that the tendency of the human heart is to say, "I am no worse than other people. I am a good Chapel-going, Church-going, Psalm-singing person! I give to the poor, I say my prayers and attend to all that sort of thing." You will never obtain mercy while you have a word of that kind to plead! Until you are like a vessel turned upside down and drained of every drop of human merit, there is no hope of salvation for you! You must sit alone and keep silent about those good works of yours, for they are all a lie and you know it. You have never done a good work in your *life*—you have either spoiled it by your selfish motives *before* it, or by some carelessness *in* it, or by some vainglorious pride *after* it. At the best, you are nothing but a boasting Pharisee, and though you may wash the outside of your cup and platter, yet your heart is full of wickedness and your soul is steeped in sin. O man, talk no more so exceeding proudly, but sit still and hold your tongue about merit and what you think you deserve before the holy God! There is no way of mercy for any of us until we shut our mouths and utter not a single boastful word, but stand guiltily silent before the Lord.

I think it is well, too, when a poor sin-burdened soul is silent before God and unable to make any *bold speeches*. I recollect that when I was first seeking the Lord, I heard some good people talking about their confidence in God. I had to hold my tongue, for I could not say a word about *that* matter. I heard a young friend say that he had found Christ, but I had to hold my tongue, for I knew that *I* had *not* found Him. And even after I *had* found Him, there were times when I dared not say so. I felt in my spirit the question, "Am I self-deceived, or am I not? And if I have spoken pretty boldly since that time, even now, occasionally, I feel that same silence creeping over me. It would have been well if Peter had been silent when he said to his Lord, "Although all shall be offended, yet will

not I." I like a man who knows not only how to speak, but how to sit still—but that sitting still part is hard work to many.

There came a young man to Demosthenes to learn oratory. He talked away at a great rate and Demosthenes said, "I must charge you double fees." "Why?" he asked. "Why," said the master, "I have *first* to teach you to hold your tongue and afterwards to instruct you how to speak." The Lord teaches true penitents how to hold their tongues. They open not their mouth when He has laid trouble upon them. And even in the company of good people they are sometimes dumb with silence and hold their tongue even from good. It is not an ill thing that they should act thus, for often the will of the Lord is not done with words and, sometimes, that silence which is frost of the mouth is thaw of the soul. And the heart flows best before God when even *praise* sits silent on our tongues. O Beloved, in your hour of darkness because of your sin, sit still and hold your tongue, for it is oftentimes the way of peace to the soul!

III. Now I shall ask your special and patient attention for just a few minutes to the third point, which is, PROFOUND HUMILIATION—"Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope." Upon this matter I would earnestly address those who are not yet saved, but who desire to be.

Dear Friends, it often happens that men do not obtain peace with God because they have not come low enough. The gate of Heaven, though it is so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, is, nevertheless, so low that pride can never pass through it. You must stoop if you would enter Heaven! "Let him put his mouth in the dust." I believe that this precept is needed by very many and that, when they obey it, they will get peace, but never till then. "Let him put his mouth in the dust." Oriental monarchs require very lowly reverence from their subjects—it is not in keeping with *our* manners and customs—but the similitude holds good in our relation to the Lord God. When we come before Him, we must prostrate ourselves till we bow our mouths in the dust. What can this expression mean? "Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope."

It means, first, that there must be *true, humble, lowly confession of sin.* You say that you have been praying, yet you have not found peace? Have you confessed your sins? This is absolutely necessary! Confess your sins to *me*, you ask? No, thank you. I do not want to hear your confession. It would do me much harm and it could do you no good to tell them to *me*. It is to God alone that this confession should be made. Some men have never really made a confession of their sin to God at all—they have done it in such general and insincere terms that it did not amount to a confession. Go enter your chamber, shut the door and get alone. And there, with words or without words, as you find it best, acknowledge before God your omissions and commissions—what you have done and what you have not done. Pour out the whole story before God and cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Do not cloak or dissemble before the Almighty! Let all your sins appear. Take a lowly place—not simply be a sinner in *name*—but confess that you are a sinner in fact

and deed. I believe that some of you are in darkness much longer than you need to be because you do not stoop to a humble confession of your sin. Let the lances into this ugly gathering of yours that brings you so much inflammation of mind and pain of spirit! Let your confession flow like water before God! Pour out your heart before Him! Acknowledge your sins, take the place of a sinner, for this is a great way towards finding salvation—"If so there may be hope."

Further than that, dear Friends, when it is said that we are to put our mouths in the dust, it means that we are to give up the habit of *putting ourselves above other people* and finding fault with others. How often is the value of our penitence destroyed because we have looked at Mistress Somebody and said, "Well, I am guilty, but still—well, I am not such a hypocrite as Mrs. So-and-So." What have you to do with her? "Oh," says another, "I know I have been a bad man, but then I—I—I have never been as bad as old So-and-So." What have you to do with him? Here you are, pretending to be humble, yet you are as proud as Lucifer! I know you—you are like that man who went up to the Temple and pretended that he was going to pray. And then he said, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are" and so forth—"nor even as this publican"—turning his eyes in disdain towards the true penitent!

There is many a man who says, "I am a sinner, but then I am a total abstainer and wear the blue ribbon—that is a good thing, is it not?" Yes, it is, but not if you trust in *it* for salvation! "Oh, but," says another, "I know that I have not lived as I ought, but I have always paid 20s. in the pound." So ought every honest man, but what is there to be proud about in *that*? Are you going to get to Heaven by paying 20s. in the pound to a man and not a penny in the pound to God? Yet that is often the way of men! Or else, perhaps, we are accusing others while we pretend that we are, ourselves, humble. We must get rid of all such bad habits if we want the Lord to have mercy upon us! I believe a sincere penitent thinks himself to be the worst man there is and *never* judges other people, for he says in his heart, "That man may be more openly guilty than I am, but very likely he does not know as much as I do, or the circumstances of his case are an excuse for him." A woman, convinced of sin, says, "It is true, that woman has fallen and her life is full of foulness, but, perhaps, if I had been tempted as she was and had been deceived as she was, I would have been even worse than she is." Oh, that we might all give up that habit of judging other people and put our mouths in the dust in self-abasement before God!

I think that putting our mouths in the dust also means that we realize our *own nothingness in the Presence of God.* We have nothing to say, nothing to claim, nothing to boast of—if the Lord should never look upon us in mercy, yet we could not complain. If He were to banish us from His Presence forever, yet we could not open our mouths to accuse Him, but must say, "You are just when You judge. You are clear when You condemn." That, dear Friends, is putting your mouth in the dust—feeling that, in God's sight, you are only like the dust. If you have sought the

Lord and have not found him, I exhort you to sink yourself lower! Believe that you have no strength, that you have no righteousness, that you are truly lost and ruined and undone, that you are nothing but a mass of loathsomeness before the thrice-holy God and bow before Him with this conviction in your heart, "if so there may be hope."

I am not going to preach upon the last part of the text because the time has almost gone and, also, for another reason—I have not to say to you, "*If so* there may be hope." There *is* hope for any man, or woman, or child here—I like to say, "child," as well as, "man, or woman," because I believe that children are often the best part of my congregation! Last Monday week, we had five children before the Church, one after the other, whose testimony for Christ was quite as clear as that of any of the elders among us! What an important part of the congregation the boys and girls make up! I believe that there are almost as many saved among the little ones, now, in this congregation as there are of grown-up people, perhaps even more. Well now, if any of you who are guilty—whether old or young—come before the Lord, confess your sin and trust in Christ for mercy—you shall have mercy! I do not know who you are and I do not care who you are—but whoever shall come and confess his sin in all lowliness of heart, and in faith, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—he shall have mercy!

Christ sits on His Throne of Grace and stretches out the silver scepter. Bow before Him and He will forgive your sin! The fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness—if you are sinful and unclean, come to the fountain that Christ has opened and which the devil cannot close—and wash and be clean this very hour! God in infinite mercy is ready to forgive! His heart yearns over the wanderers. He stretches out His hands and entreats you to come back and He is grieved until you return! If there is in your heart any sorrow for having sinned against your God—if there is any anxiety to come back to Him, come back! If you do but turn your face towards Him, while you are yet a great way off, He sees! He will have compassion on you! He will run to you! He will embrace you! Fall into His arms right now! Believe in His Son! Trust yourself with Jesus, for He has never yet failed any who trusted Him. Make Him the Trustee of your soul, for He is a Trustee who can be trusted! Deposit in His hands your spirit, for He is able to keep that which you commit to Him against that day.

We are getting into summer and I feel very anxious that none of my hearers should have to say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved." Then, before the harvest comes, now that the summer is just beginning, may the Lord incline your hearts to come and put your trust in Jesus! Many of you are from the country. You have come to see London. Of all the sights possible to you, the best will be, first, to see *yourselves*, and then to see your Savior! There is no exhibition like the exhibition of the love of God in Jesus Christ to guilty sinners! May this be the best day you have ever lived because it shall be the first day you have ever *truly* lived with the life of God in your soul! I pray

the Lord to bless my words to each of you without exception! Surely, there is not anybody here who would wish to be left out! God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LAMENTATIONS 3:1-33; 55-58.

We are about to read a chapter which is full of sorrow. While you are listening to it, some of you may be saying, "We are not in that condition." Well then, be thankful that you are not! And while you hear of the sorrows of others, bless God for the joys you, yourself, experience. At the same time, remember that there is a way of sorrow which leads, at last, to rest and piece. There is truth in the words of the poet Cowper—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

If you have never known the sorrows of the weeping Prophet, or anything like them, I am not sure that you should congratulate yourselves, for there is a brokenness of heart that is worth more than the whole world! There is a crushed and bruised spirit in which the Lord delights and which is a token for good to the one who possesses it.

Verses 1, 2. *I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.* Some of us recollect when we used to go into our room, shut the door and read such a chapter as this and say, "Here is a description of my true condition." We were once broken in pieces, torn asunder through a terrible sense of sin. Our thoughts were like a case of knives perpetually pricking us and, at such a time, these were our words as well as the words of Jeremiah, "He has led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light."

3, 4. *Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones.* Conviction of sin seems to dry up the very sap of our life till we become withered with age. Worse than the agony of a broken bone is the pain of a broken heart. When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, believe me, it is no child's play. In the case of some of us, it was sore wounding.

5. *He has built against me*—"As if He deliberately built walls to stop up my way and erected castles from which to attack my soul, 'He has built against me.'"—

5. *And compassed me with gall and travail.* "He has shut me up in a circle of bitterness."

6, 7. *He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chain heavy.* Like a prisoner in his dungeon who has to wear manacles and fetters.

8. *Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.* That is the worst trial of all, for there is comfort in prayer. But when even *that* seems denied you, into what a terrible state of sorrow is your heart brought!

9-11. *He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone, He has made my paths crooked. He was to me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in se-*

cret places. He has turned aside my ways and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. You who remember that experience, bless God that you have passed through it, that you have gone over that rough road into the place of peace and rest in Christ! You who have never known this path, it will be well for you when you do, difficult as you may find it.

12. *He has bent His bow and set me as a mark for the arrow.* "Every sermon I hear seems a shot at me, every text of Scripture seems an arrow aimed at me."

13. *He has caused the arrow of His quiver to enter into my loins.* "They are not merely shot at me, but they have actually hit me; they have wounded me; they have pierced me in vital parts."

14-17. *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones, He has covered me with ashes. And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.* "It seems so long ago since I was prosperous that I forget what it was like! I have been so troubled that I do not remember what it was to be at ease."

18-21. *And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.* Notice that in all his sorrow, this man still had hope! His soul was humbled and, therefore, he had hope. I think that in the New Zealand language, the word for hope is, "swimming thought"—the thought that swims when everything else is drowned! Oh, what a mercy it is that hope can live on when all things else appear to die!

22. *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.* Hear that, troubled heart! You are not yet destroyed, you are still in the land of the living—as we say—"on praying ground and pleading terms with God." "It is of Jehovah's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not."

23, 24. *They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him.* "With all my troubles, losses and griefs, I still have a God! Therefore will I hope in Him."

25. *The LORD is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.* Even though it is out of the depths of the utmost distress that you seek God, you shall find Him to be good to you. He is hard to none, unkind to none. Only go and test Him and try Him—and you shall find that it is even as I say.

26, 27. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.* And it is not bad for him if he keeps on bearing it in his old age! Our shoulders always need the yoke. We are such uncertain creatures that we cannot bear too much freedom, even from sorrow!

28-31. *He sits alone and keeps silent, because He has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever.* What music there is in that line! He may put you away for a while and seem to leave you, but, "the Lord will not cast off forever." God may seem to put us away from Him, but it is written, "He hates putting away "There is no divorce between Christ and the soul that is once espoused to Him! Their separation shall not be perpetual, for nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

32, 33. *But though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.* Now notice, in the 55th verse, what came to the Prophet after all this sorrow—

55, 56. *I called upon Your name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. You have heard my voice: hide not Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.* Sometimes our prayers get to be so very weak that they are only a breathing. Yet we must never forget that "Prayer is the breath of God in men, returning from where it came." And "Praying breath is never spent in vain."

57, 58. *You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not. O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul.* What a comfort it is that Christ in Heaven is our great Advocate and that He has pleaded the causes of our soul before the Throne of God!

58. *You have redeemed my life.* He who is our Advocate is also our Redeemer and, therefore, we are doubly safe! Glory be to His name!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—492, 584, 556.

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

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

THE INCOMPARABLE BRIDEGROOM AND HIS BRIDE
NO. 2469

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 23, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 10, 1866.

"What is your Beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?"
Song of Solomon 5:9.

THIS morning, [See sermon # 694, Volume 12, *"Sin Laid on Jesus."*] we had the great privilege of preaching the doctrine of Substitution and of directing the minds of God's people to the solid rock of the meritorious Sacrifice of Christ whereon all their hopes of Heaven must be built. What we have to say, tonight, is less doctrinal and more practical—therefore let us guard ourselves at the outset. If we should, with very much earnestness, urge Believers to good works, let nobody suppose that, therefore, we imagine that men are saved by works! Let no one, for a moment, *dream* that in urging the Believer to bring forth fruit to righteousness, we are at all teaching that salvation is the work of man! I have no doubt that all of us who know anything of true religion are of the same opinion as that celebrated Scotch Divine, old David Dickson, who was asked, when dying, what was the principal subject on which his thoughts were engaged. He answered, "I am gathering up all my good works and all my bad works, tying them into one bundle and throwing them all, alike, down at the foot of the Cross and am resting alone upon the finished work of Jesus."

It is related of that mighty master in Israel, James Durham, that his experience at the last was very much akin to that of his friend, Dickson, for he said, "Notwithstanding all my preaching and all my spiritual experiences, I do not know that I have anything to hang upon excepting this one sentence spoken by Christ, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.'" "Ah," replied someone who stood by Mr. Durham at the time, "you might well hazard a thousand souls, if you had them, upon the strength of that one precious text."

Having said so much by way of caution, I want to address some earnest words to the people of God upon certain practical Truths of God that arise out of our text. And the first thing I have to say is this, that the daughters of Jerusalem recognized in the spouse an exceeding beauty which dazzled and charmed them, so that they could not help calling her the "fairest among women." This was not her estimate of herself, for *she* had said, "I am black, but comely." Nor was it the estimate of her ene-

mies, for *they* had struck and wounded her. But it *was* the estimate of fair, candid and impartial onlookers.

I. This leads me to remark, first, that OUR CHARACTER SHOULD GIVE WEIGHT TO OUR PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

You will observe that it was in consequence of thinking her the "fairest among women" that they asked the spouse, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved?" They thought that one so fair might well have her choice of a Bridegroom, that one so lovely would be likely to have an eye to loveliness in her Husband and, consequently, they considered her judgment to be worth some attention—and so they put to her the question why her Beloved was more than another beloved. Take it for granted, dear Friends, as a truth which your own observation and experience will make every day more and more clear, that your power to spread religion in the world must mainly depend upon your own personal character, but, of course, in absolute reliance upon the Holy Spirit! I suppose it is the earnest wish of every Christian to win for Christ some new converts, to bring some fresh province under the dominion of the King of Kings. I will tell you how this may be accomplished.

Your power to achieve this noble purpose must largely depend upon your own *personal consistency*. It little matters what I *say* if I *do* the reverse! The world will not care about my testimony with my lips unless there is also a testimony in my daily life for God, for truth, for holiness, for everything that is honest, lovely, pure and of good report. There is that in a Christian's character which the world, though it may persecute the man, himself, learns to value. It is called consistency—that is, the making of the life stand together—not being one thing in one place and another thing in another, or one thing at one time and quite different on another occasion. It is not consistency to be devout on Sunday and to be dishonest on Monday! It is not consistency to sing the songs of Zion, today, and to shout the songs of lustful mirth tomorrow. It is not consistency to occasionally wear the yoke of Christ and yet frequently to make yourself the serf of Satan! But to make your life all of a piece is to make it powerful and when God the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, then your testimony will be noticed upon those among whom you live.

It would be ludicrous, if it were not so sorrowful a thing to be spoken of, even with weeping, that there should be professed Christians who are, through inconsistency, among the worst enemies of the Cross of Christ! I heard, the other day, a story which made me laugh. A poor creature, in a lunatic asylum, had got it into his head that he was some great one and he addressed a person who was visiting the asylum in the following words—"I am Sir William Wallace. Give me some tobacco!" What a ridiculous contrast between his proud assertion and his poor request! Who but a lunatic would have said such a thing?

Yet, alas, we know people who say, by their actions, if not in words, "I am a Christian, but I will take advantage of you when I can. I am one of the blood-royal of Heaven, my life is hid with Christ in God and my conversation is in Heaven, but—but—I like worldliness, sensual pleasure and carnal mirth quite as well as other men!" I say again that this kind of thing would be superlatively ludicrous if it were not ineffably sorrowful,

and it is, anyhow, utterly contemptible. If your life is not all of a piece, the world will soon learn how to estimate your testimony and will count you to be either a fool or a knave, or, perhaps, both!

But it is not enough to be barely consistent—what the world expects in Christians is real holiness as well as consistency. Holiness is something more than virtue. Virtue is like goodness frozen into ice, hard and cold. But holiness is that same goodness when it is thawed into a clear, running, sparkling stream. Virtue is the best thing that philosophy can produce, but holiness is the true fruit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of that, alone! There must be about us an unworldliness, a something out of the common and ordinary way, or else, mark you, that uncommon Gospel, that heavenly Gospel which we hold, will not seem to be bringing forth its legitimate fruit. If you are just barely honest and no more. If you are barely moral and no more—it is of no service that you should try to speak of Christ—the world will not reckon you as the fairest among women and it will not enquire anything about your Well-Beloved!

But, Brothers and Sisters, I feel as if, instead of exhorting you thus, I might better turn to confession, myself, and ask you to join me in confessing how far short we come of being anything like the fairest among women as to *character*. We hope that we have something Christ-like about us, but oh, how little it is! How many imperfections there are! How much is there of the old Adam and how little of the new creature in Christ Jesus! Archbishop Usher was once asked to write a treatise upon Sanctification. This he promised to do, but six months rolled away and the good Archbishop had not written a sentence. He said to a friend, "I have not begun the treatise, yet I cannot confess to a breach of my promise, for, to tell you the truth, I have done my best to write upon the subject, but when I came to look into my own heart, I saw so little of sanctification there, and found that so much which I could have written would have been merely by rote as a parrot might have talked, that I had not the courage to write it." Yet, if ever there was a man renowned for holiness, it was Archbishop Usher! If ever there was a saintly man who seemed to be one of the seraphic spirits permitted to stray beyond the companionship of his kind among poor earthworms here, it was Usher! Yet this is the confession that he makes concerning himself!

Where, then, shall we hide our diminished heads? I am sure we may all say, with good Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, who was another bright example of seraphic holiness, that what we need is more Divine Grace. He had written a pamphlet on some political matter and Lord North wrote to know what he could give him in return. His answer was, "I need what Your Lordship cannot give me—more Grace." That is also true of us—we need more Grace. It *is* to be had and if we had it, and it transformed us into what we should be, oh, what lives of happiness and of holiness we might lead here below! And what mighty workers would we be for our Lord Jesus Christ! How would His dear name be made to sound to the utmost ends of the earth! I fear it is but a dream—but just conceive that all of you, the members of this Church, were made to be truly saintly—saints of the first water, saints who had cast off the sloth of worldliness and had come out in the full glory of newness of life in Christ Jesus! Oh,

what a power might this Church become in London! And what a power to be felt the wide world over! Let us seek it. Let us strive after it, remembering that it is a truth never to be denied, that only in proportion to the sanctity and spirituality of our character will our influence be for good among the sons of men!

II. Advancing now a step, our second remark will be that WE SHOULD CHARGE OTHERS CONCERNING CHRIST. "What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?"

The "fairest among women" was asked why she had so spoken—"I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him that I am sick with love." By this, "charge," is meant, I suppose, that the spouse commanded them and spoke solemnly to them about her Beloved. *Christians, be troublesome to the world!* O house of Israel, be like a burdensome stone to the world! You are not sent here to be recognized as honorable citizens of this world, to be petted and well-treated! Even Christ, Himself, the Peaceable One, said, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled?" What I mean is this—we are *not to be quiet* about our religion! The world says to us, "Hold your tongue about religion, or at least talk about it at proper times. But do not introduce it at all seasons so as to become a pest and a nuisance." I say again and you know in what sense I mean it, *be* a nuisance to the world! Be such a man that worldlings will be compelled to feel that there is a Christian in their midst!

An officer was walking out of the royal presence on one occasion when he tripped over his sword. The king said to him, "Your sword is rather a nuisance." "Yes," was the officer's reply, "Your Majesty's enemies have often said so." May you be a nuisance to the world in *that* sense—troublesome to the enemies of the King of Kings! While your conduct should be courteous and everything that could be desired as between man and man, yet let your testimony for Christ be given without any flinching and without any mincing of the matter!

This afternoon I was reading a sermon by a certain Divine whose subject of discourse was why the working classes do not go to a place of worship and the preacher seems to have made up his mind that *whatever* is preached in this Tabernacle is especially obnoxious to laboring men and women. The reason he gives why the working classes do not attend places of worship is that we preach such dreadful doctrines! It is very remarkable that places where these Truths of God are preached, are crowded, while places where the opposite things are proclaimed are often empty! It is curious, if the doctrine of the Gospel is such a very horrible thing that it drives people away, that at the places where it *is* preached, there are more people than can get in, whereas where some of the modern doctrines are declared, you may see more spiders than people! It is an amazing circumstance, certainly, yet one for which we can easily account.

A Socinian minister was once asked by one who preached Evangelical Truth, "If I, who proclaim doctrines which you say are obnoxious to common reason, have my place full, and you, who preach such pretty, reasonable doctrines, can get nobody to hear you, do you not think it is

because the people have an idea that what I teach is true—and that what you preach, though it is very pleasant and palatable, is not true and, therefore—they do not care to hear it?" It is not by altering our testimony that we are to hope to win an audience—and it is not by hiding the Light of the Gospel under a bushel that you or I shall discharge our obligations to our Lord! We must speak up for Christ and so speak up for Him that men will be moved to ask us the question, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?"

I have read that Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, had every pew in the chapel where he preached sketched out on a plan and the names of all the occupants of the pews written on it, so that he might *pray for everyone and, if possible, speak to everyone.* Such a plan might not be practicable in so large a building as this, but it is an excellent method, but if we cannot adopt it, let this place be mapped out in your own minds and let every Believer, wherever he sits, consider that there is a little district allotted to him and let him seek to have a word of courteous Christian conversation about Divine things with all who sit near him! I suggest this as a very excellent mode of beginning to "charge" others about Christ. And then, in your daily business, in the workshop, at fit times and seasons, at periods when Christian prudence and Christian zeal would give their voice together, introduce Christ and begin to talk of Him and hold Him up as the great cure-all for human diseases, the great staff and support for human weakness! We shall never see as much blessing as we might until the work of the Church becomes far more general than it is at present.

There is something which every Believer can do for his Lord. He must be able to tell of what he has tasted and handled of the Word of Life—and if he has not tasted and handled it—then he is not a child of God at all. The best teaching in the world is *experimental*—nothing wins upon men like personal witnessing—not merely *teaching* the doctrine as we find it in the Book, but as we have *felt* it in its living power upon our own hearts! When we begin to tell of its effect upon ourselves, it is amazing what power there is upon others in that testimony! A person talks to me about a certain medicine, how it is compounded, what it looks like, how many drops must be taken at a dose and so on. Well, I do not care to hear all that and I soon forget it. But he tells me that for many months he was bed-ridden, he was in sore distress and in great pain and almost died. And, looking at him as he stands before me in perfect health, I am delighted with the change—and he says that it was that medicine which restored him. If I am a sick man in the same state as he was, I say to him, "Give me the name and address, for I must try that medicine myself."

I believe that the simple witness of converted boys and girls, converted lads and lasses, especially the witness of converted fathers and mothers and beloved friends—the witness that comes of the gray head that is backed up by years of godly living has a wonderful power for the spread of the Gospel! But we cannot expect that God will give us a very large blessing until the whole of us shall be at work for our Lord. We need not all climb up the pulpit stairs, but each one of us can proclaim Christ ac-

cording to our ability and according to the circumstances in which He has placed us. When we shall do that, then we may expect to see "greater things than these"—days that will make us laugh for joy of heart—and well-near make us dance like David did before the Ark will come when all the rank and file of the army—and even those who halt upon their crutches—shall march unanimously against the foe!

III. Thirdly, it is important for us to MAKE ALL WHO COME IN CONTACT WITH US FEEL THAT CHRIST JESUS IS FIRST AND FOREMOST WITH US.

You perceive that the question of the text is not, "What is your Beloved that He should be *equal* to others?" It is, "What is your Beloved *more* than another beloved?" The idols of the heathen are all made to stand in the Pantheon, face to face, and there is no quarrelling among them. But as soon as you introduce Christ, they must all go down, or He will not stay. The principle of the toleration of every form of doctrine—I mean not, of course, *civil* toleration which we hold to be always necessary and right, but I mean *mental* toleration—the principle of the mental toleration of all forms of doctrine and all forms and shades of action, is heathenish, for where Christ comes, He comes to reign, and when once He enters the soul of a man, it is down, down, down with everything else!

There is a text which is often misunderstood. I heard it read thus only last Sunday—"No man can serve *two* masters." I very much question whether he cannot! I believe he could serve not only two, but twenty! That is not the meaning of the text—the true reading of it is, "No man can serve two *masters*." They cannot *both* be masters. If two of them are equal, then neither of them is really master. It is not possible for the soul to be subject to two master passions. If a man says, "I love Christ," that is well. But if he says, "I love Christ and I love money—and I love them both supremely"—that man is a liar, for the thing is not possible! There is only one that can be the master passion and when Jesus enters the soul, love to Him must be the master passion of the heart!

It strikes me that a Christian, living fully up to his privileges, would be such a man as this—if he had, on one side, the opportunity to enjoy pleasure and, on the other side, a painful opportunity of honoring Christ—he would prefer to honor Christ rather than to enjoy himself. If, on the one hand, there were gain, even lawfully to be had, and on the other hand, Christ could be honored in a way that would bring no monetary gain, the man would prefer the glorifying of his Master to the obtaining of the advantage in cash which was held out to him. And if it comes to this, that by soft speeches he may get himself into good repute, but that by sternly speaking out and rebuking error he may honor his Master but bring much contempt upon himself—if he is a genuine Christian—he will always take the latter course! The first question he will ask will be, "How can I most honor my Lord? How can I best glorify Him?"

It is clear that *Christ is not first in every nominal Christian's heart*. No, alas, He is not first and He is not even second! He is very far down in the scale. Look at them—good honest trades people, perhaps, but from the first dawn of Monday morning to the putting up of the shutters on Saturday night, what is the main business of their life? It is only, "What

shall we eat?" Or, "What shall we drink?" Or, "With what shall we be clothed?" Now, where is Christ in such a case as that? Look at others—with them the question is, "Where shall I invest such-and-such an amount of spare cash? How shall I best lay by such-and-such a sum? What field shall I buy next? What house shall I add to my estate?" As for the Lord Jesus, He is put off with the cheese-parings and the candle-ends—He gets a little, now and then, dropped into the offering box, but it is only a mere trifle compared with what He ought to receive. The man's words are 999 for himself and, perhaps, not much more than half a one for Christ. Almost all his time goes to the world and not to his Lord—his whole self goes to himself, and not to the Savior to whom he professes to belong!

This is not the case with *the truly Christ-like man*. With him, Christ is first, Christ is last, Christ is midst, Christ is All in All—and when he speaks about anything connected with Christ, his words come with such a solemn earnestness that men are impressed with what he says. And they turn round to him and ask, as the daughters of Jerusalem enquired of the spouse, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?"

IV. Our last thought is this—if ever, through the Grace of God, we should possess such a character and bear such a testimony as we have been talking about, so that men shall ask us the question of the text—IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER IT.

This is an age in which the world asks many questions, but from some Christians it cannot get an answer. I will say one thing which some of you may not like to hear, perhaps, but I cannot help it. There are some of you who are Baptists—but why? Well, I suppose, because *you happen to be one* and you have followed me without carefully studying the teaching of the New Testament upon the question. I fear it is so with some of you. And there are others of you who are Wesleyans, or Independents, or church people, but the only reason you can give for being so is that your grandmother, or your mother happened to be of that denomination. This is an age in which people do not estimate the Truth of God as they should! A good earnest controversy seems to me to be a very healthy thing because it turns men's attention somewhat more than usual to Divine things—but you know how it is—even with many professing Christian people—they think it would be wicked to read a novel, but if it is written upon a religious subject, then it is a very proper thing! There is hardly a weekly newspaper, nowadays, or even a penny magazine that can live without having a novel in it—and there must be a market for all this rubbish or it would not be supplied so plentifully! Why, Sirs, in Puritan times, men read solid books like John Owen's, "On the Mortification of Sin." They studied such works as Richard Gilpin's, "On Satan's Temptations," or Stephen Charnock's, "The Divine Attributes." But in these days, people who ought to read these solid books so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, are often wasting their time over poor stuff which only addles the brain and does the soul no good!

I would to God that we could again see a race of sturdy Believers who would hold to nothing but what they had tested by the Word of God! Be-

lievers who would receive nothing merely because it was taught by their minister, or by their parents, or by *any* human authority, but who would accept with unquestioning faith everything that is revealed in the Inspired Book! Our motto should still be, "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light of God in them." We need to breed, again—and oh, may God give us Grace to do so—a race of men who shall be rooted and grounded in the faith and who, when they are asked for a reason for the hope that is in them, shall be able to give it—not with fear and trembling and hesitation—but with holy boldness and determination because they have tested and tried the matter for themselves!

See how the spouse does—she does not pause a minute before she gives her reply. She is asked, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved?" And she has the answer, as we say, at her fingertips, and why was this? Why, because she had it in her heart! So she says, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." She does not say, "Wait a bit, I must read up on that question. I must get myself well-instructed upon it." It is such a vital point and one so dear to her, as it touches the Person of her Lord, that she answers at once, "Is my Beloved better than any other beloved? Certainly He is and here are the reasons." She puts them together, one after another, without a pause, so that the daughters of Jerusalem must have been convinced. And I commend her example to you, also, my Beloved in Christ Jesus! Study the Word, that your faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God!

I beseech you, if I have taught you anything that is not revealed in the Scriptures, or if you have received anything only as by *my* authority, give it up until you have tested and tried it by the Word of the Lord! I am not afraid what the result will be, for if in anything I have erred, I pray the Lord to teach me and also to teach you, so that we may grow together in the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of the faith. Let us all seek to be taught of God and then, with a holy life added to this Divine instruction—and a clear testimony for Jesus Christ constantly borne by us—our witnessing will tell upon the age in which we live!

Oh, that the Lord would send us times of true revival once again! Run your finger down the page of history till you come to the Reformation—what was there in Luther, in Calvin, in Zwingli—that *they* should have been able to shake the world any more than there is in men who are living nowadays? Nothing but this—that the Reformers believed what they believed and they spoke with an awful earnestness, like men who meant what they said—and straightway there arose a noble race of men—men who felt the power of faith and lived it out! And the world was made to feel that "there were giants in those days." Then, again, in later times, when the Church had fallen into a fatal slumber, there came the age of Whitefield and Wesley. What was the power of the early Methodists? Why, simply the power of true sincerity combined with holiness! What if I say that it was the power of intruding religion upon men, of *forcing* men to hear God's voice, of compelling a sleeping world to wake out of its slumbers?

As I sat, last week, in the hall of the Free Church Assembly in Edinburgh, just beneath the Castle, I started in my seat! I thought the whole hall was going to fall, for at one o'clock the gun on the Castle was fired from Greenwich by electricity! It startled every one of us and I noticed that nearly everybody took out his watch to see whether it was right by the gun. I thought to myself, "That is just what the Christian Church ought to do. It ought, at the proper time, to give a loud, clear, thundering testimony for God and for Truth, so that every man might examine his own conscience and get himself put right where he is wrong." Our testimony for Christ ought not to be like the ticking of an ordinary clock, or as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, but a mighty booming noise that commands and that *demands* a hearing! Let our soul be but linked with Heaven—let the Spirit of the Lord flash the message along the wires—and our life may be just as accurate and just as startling as that gun at Edinburgh! So, when men ask us, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us?" we shall have an answer ready for them, which may God bless to them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 807, 802.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
SONG OF SOLOMON 1.

We will, this evening, read in the one Book of the Bible which is wholly given up to fellowship. I allude to the Book of Canticles. This Book stands like the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden and no man shall ever be able to pluck its fruit, and eat thereof, until first he has been brought by Christ past the sword of the cherubim, and led to rejoice in the love which has delivered him from death! The Song of Solomon is only to be comprehended by the men whose standing is within the veil. The outer-court worshippers and even those who only enter the court of the priests think the Book a very strange one, but they who some very near to Christ can often see in this Song of Solomon the only expression which their love to their Lord desires.

Verses 1-2. *The song of songs, which is Solomon's. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine.* The Person here alluded to is not named. This omission is very common and usual to all-absorbing love. The spouse is thinking so much of Christ Jesus her Lord that it is not necessary for her to name Him. She cannot make a mistake and she is so oblivious of all else that she does not think of them, nor of those who would ask, "Who is this of whom you speak?" The communion is so close between herself and her Lord that His name is left out—"Let *Him* kiss me." By the kiss is to be understood that strange and blessed manifestation of love which Christ gives from Himself to His children. Inasmuch as the word, "kisses," is in the plural, the spouse asks that she may have the favor multiplied. And inasmuch as she mentions the, "mouth," of her Bridegroom, it is because she wishes to receive the kisses fresh and warm from His sacred Person. "For Your love is better than wine." It is better in itself, for it is more costly. Did it not flow out in streams of blood from a better winepress than earth's best wine has ever

known? It is better, too, in its *effects*—more exhilarating, more strengthening—and it leaves no ill results.

3. *Because of the savor of Your good ointments, Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You.* The spouse surveys all the attributes of Christ and she compares them to separate and precious ointments. Christ is anointed as Prophet, Priest and King, and in each of these anointings He is a source of sweetness and fragrance to His people. But as if jealous of herself for having talked of the "ointments" when she should have spoken of *Him*, she seems to say, "Your very name is as an alabaster box when it is opened, and the odor of the precious spikenard fills the room"—

"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast."

"Your name is as ointment poured forth" and the spouse adds, as a note of commendation, "therefore do the virgins love You."

4. *Draw me, we will run after You.* She feels, perhaps, as you do now, beloved Brothers and Sisters, heavy of heart. She cannot fly, nor reach her Lord, but her heart longs after Him, so she cries, "Draw me, we will run after You." While she prays the prayer, others feel it suitable to them, also, so they join with her. When Christ draws us, we do not walk, but "run" after Him! There is no heavy going, then! When Christ draws us, how swiftly do we fly, as the dove to the dovecote when Jesus' Grace entices us! Running soon brings the spouse to her Lord, for notice the next clause—

4. *The king has brought me into His chambers.* It is done—"The King has brought me into His chambers." Come to Him in prayer and, perhaps, while you are yet speaking, He will hear! While you are musing, the fire shall burn and you shall be able to say, "Yes, He has brought me near to Himself, to the retired chamber where I may be alone with Him, to the chamber of riches and delights, where I may feast with Him."

4. *We will be glad and rejoice in You.* This is the sure result of getting into the inner chamber with Christ.

4. *We will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You.* Not only the just in heart—those pure and lowly ones who, wherever the Lamb leads, from His footsteps never depart—but the upright, those who love moral excellence and virtue! They *must* love Christ. Now the singer's note changes—

5. *I am black.* Ah, my Soul, how true is that of you! "I am black"—

5. *But comely.* Oh, glorious faith, that can, through the blackness, still see the comeliness! We are comely when covered with the righteousness of Christ, though black in ourselves! "I am black, but comely"—

5. *O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar.* Smoke-dried, foul, filthy, poverty-stricken.

5. *As the curtains of Solomon.* Bedecked with embroidery made with gold and silver threads and fit for a king's tent, so strangely mixed is the nature of the Believer—"black but comely"…"as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon."

6. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.* Perhaps you are afraid, Beloved, that the Master should look at you, for you feel yourself so unworthy.

6. *My mother's children were angry with me.* You have been persecuted until your spirit is broken.

6. *They made me the keeper of the vineyards.* Perhaps you have been put to some ignoble work. You have toiled under the whip of the Law, but you have a worse sorrow than this, for you have to add—

6. *But my own vineyard have I not kept.* You are conscious that you have restrained prayer, that you have neglected searching the Word, that you have not lived as near to God as you ought to have done—and all this seems to make you feel as if you could not come into close communion with Christ! Come, my Brother, my Sister—shake off your unbelief! May the Master shake it off from you! Then once again you can change the note, as the spouse does here—

7. *Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?* There are other shepherds, though they are false ones, and these pretend to be companions of Christ. But why should we turn aside to them? And yet we shall, O our Beloved One, unless You tell us where to follow You and how to abide close by Your side, or tell us where you make Your flock to rest at noon! Here comes the answer—

8. *If you know not, O you fairest among women.* Just note that. *She* said that she was black, but Christ says that she is the fairest among women! In fact, there is a passage in the Song where He twice calls her fair. As Erskine puts it—

"Lo! You are fair! Lo! You are fair,
Twice fair are you, I say.
My Grace, My righteousness becomes
Your doubly-bright array."

O you faithful ones, what joy is contained in this warm praise which your Lord gives to you!" If you know not, O you fairest among women—

8. *Go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed your kids beside the shepherds' tents.* There are two ways of finding Christ. First, follow after true Believers—most of you know some experienced Christians—follow their footsteps and you shall so find their God. Or else go to the shepherds' tents—wait on the ministry of the Word—the Lord is often pleased to manifest Himself to His people when they are willing to hear what messages He sends through His ambassadors.

9. *I have compared you, O My love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.* True Believers are as strong, as noble, as beautiful as the horses in Pharaoh's chariots which were renowned throughout all the world. Let us be like those horses—let us all pull together—let us draw the great chariot of our King behind us. Let us be content to wear His harness, that we may be partakers of His splendid triumph.

10. *Your cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, your neck with chains of gold.* Christ here praises His Church. Orientals were in the habit of wearing jewels in such abundance that their cheeks were covered with them, and then they multiplied the chains of gold upon their necks. And

the Graces which Christ gives to His people, and especially the various parts of His own finished work become to them like rows of jewels and chains of gold.

11. *We will make you borders of gold with studs of silver.* As if Father, Son and Holy Spirit would all work together to make the Believer perfectly beautiful.

12-13. *While the King sits at His table, my spikenard sends forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh is my Well-Beloved to me.* Not a sprig, mark you, but a *bundle* of myrrh.

13. *He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.* Christ, as a bundle of myrrh, shall always be near our hearts, so that every life-pulse shall come from Him.

14. *My Beloved is to me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.* He is not, I say again, one sprig or spray of camphire, but a cluster of it. The spouse, you see, multiplies figures to describe her Bridegroom and even when she has done so, she cannot reach the height of His Glory—

"Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor Heaven, His full resemblance bears!
His beauties we can never trace,
Till we behold Him face to face."

16. *Behold, you are fair, My love; behold, you are fair; you have doves' eyes.* So Christ speaks of His Church. She has the soft, mild, tender eyes of a dove. Besides, she has the discerning eyes by which the dove can distinguish between carrion and fit food. And then she has clear eyes like that of the dove. You know that the dove, or pigeon, when it is taken far away from home and wants to reach its cote, flies round and round till it gets up high and then it looks for miles, perhaps for hundreds of miles, till it tracks with unerring eyes its own resting place, or some familiar landmark, and then, with cutting wings it flies through the ether till it reaches its home! So, every Believer should have doves' eyes—eyes that can see from earth to Heaven, and see Christ in His Glory, even when His cause is disowned by men!

16, 17. *Behold, You are fair, my Beloved, yes, pleasant: also our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.* We have the word, "rafters," here, but it should be, "galleries." The "bed" expresses the near fellowship which Christ has with His people. The "house" is a larger expression and, perhaps, denotes the whole Church. And the "galleries" signify the ordinances of Grace. You notice that these are made of strong wood, the one of cedar and the other of fir and truly, dear Friends, in closing our reading, we can say to our Lord—

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

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

JACOB AND DOUBTING SOULS A PARALLEL
NO. 2470

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 21, 1896,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 20, 1886.

"And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive:
I will go and see him before I die."
Genesis 45:28.

I THINK that the Patriarch Jacob may well serve as the type and emblem of a doubting soul, one who has been told the good news of salvation, the Gospel of God's Grace, but who cannot bring his mind to believe it.

Let us think for a few minutes of old Jacob. First of all, he was a man who was very ready to believe evil tidings. When his sons held up before him a coat dipped in the blood of a kid and asked him if it was not the coat he had given to Joseph, the Patriarch answered, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast has devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces." He had no doubt about it, yet it was not true. And we have many hearers who will believe anything that is terrible, even though it may not be true. If there is something in the sermon which seems to condemn them, even though it may not be *meant* to condemn them, they are sure to take home that part of the discourse. If they see any passage of Scripture that appears to frown upon them, they retain that in their memory and they keep on stinging themselves with it, often making themselves unhappy with that which was never intended to apply to them! I wish that readiness to believe the dark sayings could be turned to an equal readiness to receive the consolations of the Word of God. Surely, we ought not to be so prejudiced against ourselves as to accept every evil thing and to reject every good thing. No, let us weigh fairly the evidence for either form of teaching and believe, or reject either according as the evidence, for it may be strong or weak.

Jacob would, all the while, have willingly believed that which was good, if he could have believed it. If you could have asked him if he had any objection to believe that Joseph was alive, the old man would have answered, "Oh, no! It would be the joy of my heart if I could but think it to be true." There are some whom I am now addressing who are in a similar case. Ask them whether they have any objection to believe that Jesus Christ is their Savior, that He loved them and gave Himself for them, and they would, each one, reply, "Object to believe this? Why, I would give my eyes—I would give my *life*—if I could but think it to be true!" Such an unbeliever as that is a very hopeful one because it is evident that he is not a *willful* unbeliever—he does not *desire* to be so. His heart longs to grasp the Truth of God which, for the moment, his mind

dares not accept! Jacob, in this respect, is the type of very many who hear the Gospel, but dare not receive it and yet oh, how they wish they could! Their very soul hungers and thirsts after it, but they are afraid to take it lest they should be taking that which is not truly theirs.

So far, the parallel between Jacob and the doubting soul runs very properly. Next notice that to the Patriarch, the truth about his son Joseph seemed altogether incredible. Joseph was alive and governor over all the land of Egypt—but the old man had so long believed the contrary that he could not readily get out of the rut! He had sorrowfully said, "Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces," and this idea, though it was most painful to him, had, nevertheless, eaten its way into his belief and he could not get it out of him. So do I know some who have written bitter things against themselves—"I shall be lost, I know I shall. It is not possible that Christ will save *me*. He will certainly reject me." And, although that is quite untrue—as untrue as Jacob's belief that Joseph was dead—yet they have hugged their despair so long that they cannot give it up! They are like the man who refused to be comforted, or those afflicted ones of whom we read, "Their soul abhors all manner of meat and they draw near to the gates of death." Oh, that the Holy Spirit would come upon these poor unwilling doubters and help them to know that a lie, however long it is believed, is not the truth! Though we may be in despondency of spirit for *years*, yet, if there is no real cause for that despondency, it is a pity that we should continue in it. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would enable us to break those bands asunder and joyfully to believe what is true—that there is a Savior, an all-sufficient Savior, that all power is committed into His hands—and that He will rejoice this very hour to save and bless our souls!

The news appeared incredible to Jacob because it seemed "too good to be true." His eyes flashed for the moment with a joyful light. "Joseph alive? Joseph—my Joseph—ruler over all the land of Egypt?" And then the very brightness of the thought seemed to blind the eyes of his faith. "It cannot be true," he said—"it is too good to be true." Suppose that one of you had lost a son many years ago and that a person met you outside the Tabernacle and said to you, "That boy of yours who was reported dead 20 years ago, is not dead! He is in Australia, alive and well"? You would be staggered, would you not? And I have no doubt you would say to yourself, "It must be somebody like him, or somebody else of the same name—it cannot be *my* son—it is impossible! I *know* that he is dead." You would hardly believe it! Therefore, do not blame poor old Jacob for *his* doubts!

There are many who are, *spiritually*, in just that state. They say, "What? You say that Jesus died for *me*, that I have been redeemed with His most precious blood, that I can have my sins forgiven? It cannot be! What? That I can be taken up to dwell with Christ in Heaven? Oh, that it were true! It cannot be true. I did sing, just now—

'Even me, even me,
Let Your mercy light on me.'

but oh, surely, it cannot come to me! I must be left out. When the showers of blessing are falling, I cannot hope that there will be even a *drop* for

me." Well, then, you and old Jacob are very much alike! I think you must be first cousins! Yet Jacob was wrong and so are you—the news is *not* "too good to be true."

Through not believing his sons, Jacob began to faint in spirit. When they told him that Joseph was yet alive, we read that "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." There is nothing that so stops the action of the heart and brings on faintness of the spirit as unbelief! As soon as the old man began to believe the good tidings that his sons brought, "the spirit of Jacob, their father, revived." Faith makes our spirits revive, but unbelief seems to strike us dead. I do not wonder that some of you are sad, dull and unhappy—as long as you cherish your unbelief, you must be so. O Holy Spirit, deliver them from this unbelief! Revive them by enabling them to believe what is true—there is a Savior, a Savior yet alive, a Savior who is Lord of All—able and willing to save them!

There, then, is the parallel between Jacob and a doubting soul.

But, at last, Jacob rose out of his despondency and doubt. According to our text, "Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive: I will go and see him before I die." I think the time has come for some others to say, "It is enough." After having been attendants on the means of Grace, perhaps for 30 years or more, they ought to be able to say, "It is enough." There came in here, last Lord's Day, from a distant part of the country, an aged man, a farmer. He came up on Saturday for no other reason but to find the Savior. He heard me say that I would see enquirers on Tuesday, so he was here then. He said, "I left my farm, though it is a large one," and then he told me something about himself, and he added, "I want to find the Savior. I thought, Sir, I would come and see if I could find Christ on the Sabbath day and I waited on that I might go to the Prayer Meeting on Monday night, and then come and speak to you about my soul."

I thought, "Yes, and it is worthwhile to leave your farm to find a Savior. It is worthwhile to come from a distant county of England—it would be worthwhile to come from the ends of the earth if one might but find the Savior." Before I left him, I think he could say, "It is enough. Jesus is still alive and I will trust Him even now"—and he went on his way rejoicing! Oh, that some others might be able to say with him, "It is enough!"

There are two points upon which I think Jacob could say, "It is enough." First, *the evidence was enough to convince him*—"It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive." Secondly, *the conviction was enough to move him*—"I will go and see him before I die." The second point is quite as important as the first. Indeed, it is that to which the first ought to practically lead us.

I. The first point is that Jacob had ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVINCE HIM—"It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive."

The question for us to consider concerns not Joseph, but Jesus. He is still alive. He died upon the Cross, but He has risen from the dead and gone into Glory—"therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

The evidence that good old Jacob had received was *personal testimony*. His sons said concerning Joseph, "We have been to Egypt and we have seen him." There have been many witnesses to testify that Christ is still alive. Not only did the 11 Apostles see Him many times, but over 500 brethren at once saw the Son of God after He had risen from the dead. There is no fact in history that is better attested than the fact that He was crucified and that He rose again. The Resurrection is as true after nearly 1,900 years as it was the day it happened! The distance of time does not alter the fact! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on Calvary and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. The third day He rose from the dead, no more to die, and ascended into Heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God. To this fact, His disciples bore unfaltering witness—they were honest, simple-minded men, without enough imagination to make up the story. They were so sure of this Truth that they died rather than deny it—most of them died by the most painful forms of death—yet nothing could ever make one of them speak a word to the contrary! They declared that they had seen Him, that they had eaten with Him—some of them could say that they had touched Him and one had put His finger into the print of the nails. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ is still alive and I pray that each one here may say, "The testimony of these many witnesses is true, I believe it. It is enough; Jesus is still alive."

Moreover, the Holy Spirit bore witness to this fact, for after the ascension of the Savior, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and their companions and they began to speak with other tongues. They went into all the countries of the world and wherever they went, they were able to speak the language without having to learn it. At the same time, the Holy Spirit enabled them to work miracles by which the sick were healed—and these two things, together, were the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, still lived and that in His name salvation was to be preached to the sons of men! To me, this is evidence enough—the witness of faithful men and the works of the Holy Spirit.

Beside that, there are many of us who are witnesses that, in answer to prayer, we have received pardon through the living Christ. We have also received, through that living Christ, a new life into our soul. We have passed from death to life and those who knew us before our conversion must notice a very remarkable change in us. They may not all *admire* it, but they must all *admit* it and bear witness that we are now other than we used to be! The Lord Jesus, in whom we have trusted, has given us new motives, new desires—in fact, a new nature and a new life—and we are witnesses to this Truth of God that He is a living Savior, still mighty to save! I wish you could all say, with regard to these witnesses, "It is enough." I do not know what more witnesses we can give you and I may say of the Apostles, and of all those who bear witness by the Holy Spirit, "If you receive not their witness, neither will you believe though men should rise from the dead and bear testimony to the fact that Jesus lives to save the sons of men."

But then Jacob had, in addition to this personal testimony of witnesses, the testimony of *accurate reports*, for we find that Jacob's sons

told their father, "all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them." Those words of Joseph were remarkable words, for he traced God's Providence in all that had happened. He said to his brothers, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God, and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Jacob knew that those words were after the manner of Joseph, for Joseph always lived in the fear and love of God. As for our Lord Jesus Christ, He has come to teach us of the Father. He reveals God to us—that which He speaks to us, He speaks not of Himself, but in the power and in the name of God—and we know that His word is true because it is a word which glorifies God and not man!

Joseph also spoke somewhat about his own position and power. "Tell my father," he said, "thus says your son, Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt." So, the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that all power is given to Him in Heaven and on earth and, therefore, we are to go and teach all nations and bring them as disciples to His feet. The words He speaks concerning Himself are not boastful or false—they are the utterance of a humble, meek and lowly Savior who never said a word more or less than the truth!

Joseph had also spoken to them very tenderly and kindly about their father. He would do everything for his father and his brothers, giving them the best of the land. And our Lord Jesus has spoken very tenderly to us. "Come to Me," He says, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you hear them or read them, are their own witness! There is a certain distinct unique majesty about the language of Jesus Christ which somehow penetrates to the hearts of men and carries its own convincing witness into the mind. I pray you, then—you who have for years heard His words—say, "It is enough. We have heard quite sufficient from Him to compel us to believe that He lives and that He is able to save." How long must He continue to speak to you who are now getting old hearers of the Gospel and yet have not believed it? How much longer must we persuade, entreat, exhort in the name of the Lord Jesus? How much longer must His Words be read and quoted in your hearing? May God the Holy Spirit speedily end your indecision and bring you, each one, to say, "It is enough; Jesus is alive, there is a living Savior, I will take Him to be my Savior!"

There were also *abundant tokens* which greatly helped to convince old Jacob—"When he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him," he said, "It is enough." To what shall I liken these wagons? It seems to me that some of you who are doubting whether Christ will save you ought to think to yourselves, "Well, there is the Sabbath, which is a special token of God's love." As I came here this evening, I thought to myself, "Why has God appointed a Sabbath day if He does not mean to give rest to men?" What a mockery it is to have one day in seven set apart for you to think of God if God does not mean to think of you! The very institution of the Sabbath seems to me to be a "wagon" in which to bring you to

Christ. And why does God send ministers to preach His Gospel? I said to myself, as I came here this evening, "I am going on the silliest errand that ever moved the foot of man unless God means to save men by the message He has given me to deliver." What is the use of my talking, and talking, and talking, unless there is a living Christ and unless that living Christ is really able to save? He has sent you a minister who, with all his faults, loves your souls and who would do anything within the compass of a human mind to bring you to Christ if he only knew how to do it! Surely God did not send us to speak in His name and move us to an agony about your souls if He did not mean to bless you! So, the Christian ministry, itself, is like a "wagon" in which to bring men to Christ.

I have often thought to myself, when I have been going home after preaching, "I have put the Truth of God before my hearers so plainly that if they want to be saved, I have clearly shown them the way to Christ." I used to attend the means of Grace very, very often when I was under concern of soul, and to the best of my knowledge and belief I never heard the Gospel simply and plainly put to me while I was listening for it. This is the pity, that so often our Brothers preach very fine sermons, but they are no good to seeking souls and they do not lead them to Christ. But as soon as I heard that poor Primitive Methodist preach Christ—and he preached Christ, alone, because he did not know anything else and I, myself, am very much in that condition—why, as soon as ever I heard that, I laid hold of it! When fish are hungry, they bite at the bait, and if you really want Christ, you will at once lay hold of Him! If you do not accept Him, at any rate He has been plainly set before you. And if you refuse Him, you shall deliberately and willfully reject and refuse Him. I pray that you may not do that.

O Sinner, play not the fool with your own soul! If you must play, go home to your children, pick up their toys, throw their balls and twist their skipping-ropes, but trifle not with your souls, and with God, and Heaven and Hell! If I have lied to you about these matters, condemn me, for I deserve it. But if I have spoken the truth to you, hear me, or if you do not hear me, hear the still small voice of your own conscience, or rather, hear the voice of God which has been speaking through me! Believe in Jesus, now that you are under the influence of a ministry which may be to you what Joseph's wagons were to old Jacob!

Think also, *why* is it that you are instructed in the Truths revealed in the Word of God? Why is it that there are so many expostulations and warnings in it? Why is it that this precious Book is put into all your homes? Why is it so full of invitations and promises but that all this is intended to be a "wagon" to bring you to your Joseph, even to Jesus? When you see God, as it were, moving Heaven and earth to help you to salvation, bending Providence in the direction of aiding you to hear and to believe the Gospel, surely you ought to say, "It is enough; Jesus is still alive; God means mercy for me; Christ Jesus can save me and He will save me."—

"Jesus sits on Zion's hill,
And receives poor sinners still."

The evidence brought before Jacob was sufficient to convince him. He said, "It is enough." Oh, that you, also, may say the same concerning the evidence brought before you!

II. But now comes the tug of war—THE CONVICTION WAS ENOUGH TO MOVE HIM. "Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive; I will go and see him before I die."

Oh, how many people there are in the world who say, "Yes, there is a Savior," and yet they are not saved! Some of you have often sung—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

Is it so? Do you believe that? Then, why have not you lost all your guilty stains? "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." You never doubted the truth of that text and yet you have not believed on the only-begotten Son of God and you have not received everlasting life! I can understand those who reject the Scriptures, altogether, and who deny that there is any Savior for sinners. I see where they are and feel that there is some kind of consistency in their conduct, deeply as I grieve over it, but I cannot understand what *you* mean when you *admit* the truth of what we preach, yet do not practically obey it! If the Gospel is true, why do you not believe it? If you believe it, why do you not act upon it? It is not sufficient to merely *say* that you trust Christ for salvation and then to fancy there is nothing further to be done.

I have often tried to expose that delusion by representing a pilot as being brought on board a vessel and the captain and sailors saying that they all had confidence in him—that he would take the ship safely into the haven. They said they trusted him but, having declared their faith in him, they all went below and lay down to sleep. Now, of course, the pilot needed to have the sails attended to and the ship put in good trim! And he needed the helmsman to manage the rudder, so he called out, "What are you all doing down there? Why have you all run away from me?" And one of them answered, "Because we trust in you! You are the pilot and you said you would bring us safely into port. We trust in you, so the captain has gone to his cabin and all the sailors have gone to their berths. You see, it is a wet night, a strong northwester is blowing, it is very cold and we would rather be comfortable and snug in our berths than up there on deck. You said that you would bring us to the haven and we trust in you to do it." The pilot would, of course, reply, "You do not really trust in me, for if you did, you would do as I bid you! You are mocking me, you are insulting me. You have brought me on board your ship to make a fool of me! If you really trusted me, every man would take his proper place and do his duty, and then, as I gave the word of command, it would be obeyed, and so you would be brought safely into port."

It is just so with Christ and ourselves. We trust Him entirely to save us, but we have no right to say that we are saved if we do not practically obey Him. It is beyond all excuse that men should know that they need a Savior and that there is a Savior—and yet that they should not trust that Savior! It is as if Jacob had said, "Joseph is still alive, but I shall not trouble my head about him." Oh, no, no, no! The Patriarch does not talk

like that, but he says, "Joseph is still alive; I will go and see him before I die." And, straightway, the poor old man and his household started to go down into Egypt—for the very next verse reads, "And Israel took his journey with all that he had."

One reason why Jacob wanted to go to Egypt was because *he wished to see his son*. Some of us know the delight of seeing, again, a dear son who has been absent from us for years, and of seeing him return. It is not so much a matter for us to *talk* about—it is rather a thing for our own hearts to rejoice over and to remember! And we often breathe the prayer, "God grant that we may see our beloved son again!" Yet, after all, to see a son is but the gratification of a natural affection—there is a great deal more reason why we should, by faith, see our Savior, for he who truly sees the Son of God shall live forever! O dear Hearts—

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

A faith-look to God in human flesh, a believing sight of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree will bring you life forevermore! I think that every sinner who knows that there is a living Christ ought to say, "I will go and see Him, whatever else I do not go to see." There are some sights in the world of which we say, "I should like to go and see that." Well, you may forego all the things of beauty that ever charmed the eyes of men, but, I charge you, do not forego this sight of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is the Heaven of angels! He is the delight of God, Himself! There is no true life for you other than that which will come through your looking to Him who says, "Look to Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Since you believe that there is a Savior, I pray that you may be moved at once to say, "I will go and see Him." May you be preserved from putting it off even till the daylight breaks again! This very hour, through your tears, look straight away to the Cross and may the Lord Jesus Christ reveal Himself to you, that in His light you may see the Light of God!

Further, this old man, who said, "I will go and see my son," yet felt that *it was but for a little while*. He says, "I will go and see him before I die." He had 17 more years to live, but he did not know that. He felt so old a man at 130 that he thought he should only just manage to see his son and, perhaps, die on his neck. He said, "But I will go and see him, even though it is only with my dying eyes. I will die with the sight of Joseph before me and that will be enough to make me happy." And, dear Souls, if you did but get to Jesus, you might be happy if you could only say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." But it need not be death to you any more than it was to Jacob! Indeed, when you have seen Him, you shall live and never die! But your eyes shall be opened to see yet more and more of Him and the light of Christ shall so shine into your soul that you shall behold Him after a still more glorious fashion till He shall be the joy of your heart and the Heaven of your soul forever! Therefore, since there is such a living Savior, go to Him, I pray you, and you shall not merely see Him for a little while and then die, but you shall see Him and live forever! Therefore hasten by faith to see Him this very moment!

Old Jacob also felt that *age should not hinder, but rather speed him.* He believed that he was soon going to die, but he said, "I will go and see him before I die." I think that Jacob's age really made him go more quickly. "Ah," he said to himself, "I shall soon be dead, therefore let me hasten down to Joseph, that I may see him before I die." So, dear Friends, do not let anyone say, "I am too old to be saved." Who is too old to trust Christ? Who is too old to seek and find the Savior? I have often heard stories told about people not being converted until after they are 55 or thereabouts—but that is all untrue and I do not believe a word of it! I have seen just as many people in proportion converted at one age as at another. There are more young people in the world than there are aged persons and, therefore, there are more people converted, by God's Grace, while they are young. There are fewer old people than young ones, but I thank God that even in this building, I could point out a great many who I know who were baptized after their hair had grown gray! Some of them put their trust in Jesus when they were 70 years old and others even later than that!

There was a dear old Brother who came in here when he was past 80 years of age—and he found the Savior! He was such a Little-Faith, or Feeble-Mind, that he hardly dared to speak to any of us as he came in and out among us. But at last he said to himself, "I must join the Church." I fancy that he was 88 when he was baptized and he was so happy with us for about six months, but then he gently slipped away and went Home. I am sure I never saw a more childlike person, or a more genuine conversion than that of this dear old man! However old you are, Friend, come along! If Methuselah were here, I would preach to him the same Gospel that I would teach to one of these dear girls, for, however old a sinner is, there is nothing in the Gospel about limiting it to persons of a certain age. "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to *every* creature" does not mean, go and begin picking out the creatures, and saying, "I only preach the Gospel to people who are under a specified age." Go home, and go to bed, Sir, if that is how you talk! Christ never sent you on such an errand as that! He sent us to preach the Gospel to every creature and to you who are almost worn out, if there is but life in you, I cry, "Come along, trust in Jesus, and He will save even you!"—

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

and, returning, he shall find Christ! Be quick about it, however, you who are getting on in life, you who are far advanced in years, and may God bless you!

Yesterday I had many kind letters congratulating me on completing my 52nd year, but there was one that did a little surprise and amuse me. One Brother writes that he has read my sermons for many years and that, at *my advanced age*, he cannot pray that I may have many returns of the day—but he does trust that God may spare me at least two or three years longer for the good of the Church! Well, as I read the letter, I could not help smiling, as you do, for I do not feel that I am quite as advanced in age as *that.* But still, I thought that, perhaps, this Brother's letter might be prophetic. We may be older than we think we are—and

two or three years may be all the time we are to have here. [Brother Spurgeon went Home less than six years later.—EO] At any rate, I will try to work for Christ as earnestly as if I had only two or three years to live, and then it may be that He will add to us yet more, but, if not, what does it matter? We shall go Home to Him who sent us and be gathered to our Father in peace.

Once more, old Jacob was not kept back from going to see his son because it *was a long journey into Egypt*. Journeys appear longer to old men than they do to young folk and it was a very great undertaking to go so far with those 70 and more people around him. There would be a deal of packing up to be done and there were no moving vans in those days to carry everything for the whole company. It was the transplanting of a grand old tree and it was a difficult task, to move so venerable an oak, with such wide-spreading roots and branches! Yet Jacob said, "I will go and see Joseph before I die." Now, dear Friend, if it does seem a long way to Jesus, yet undertake the journey! And if you can persuade your wife and all your children to go, so much the better. Christ will receive them all in Goshen and they shall dwell with Him forever! I wish that there might be a blessed migration of many who have been rooted to the soil of the old Canaan, the sinful place, who will now go, not down to Egypt, but up to Jesus in the land of plenty and of purity, to dwell with Him forever! That which ruins so many is that hesitancy, that delaying, that halting between two opinions which I find, in the original, is hopping upon two twigs and never resting upon either! Let not that be the case with you. Procrastination is the devil's net in which myriads are entangled to their utter destruction—may the Lord deliver any of you who have been caught in it!

Decide for Christ now, I beseech you! May the Holy Spirit constrain you to decide at once, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—241, 508, 607.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 45:9-28; JOHN 5:24-44.

Genesis 45:9. *Hurry up and go up to my father, and say to him, Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, tarry not.* Joseph, having made himself known to his brothers, bids them return to their father and bring him down to Egypt to see his long-lost son.

10-11. *And you shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you, and your children, and your children's children, and your flocks and your herds, and all that you have: and there will I nourish you; for yet there are five years of famine; lest you, and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty.* It is just like Joseph to speak thus, kindly, and to put the invitation so attractively to his father—"You shall be near to me." That would be the greatest joy of all to old Jacob and this is the greatest joy to a sinner when he comes to Christ, our great Joseph—"You shall be near to Me." It is not merely that He gives us the

land of Goshen to dwell in, but He promises that we shall be near Him and that is best of all!

12-22. *And, behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you. And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry up and bring down my father here. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them: and after that his brothers talked with him. And the report thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brothers are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Say to your brothers, This do you, load your beasts, and depart, get you to the land of Canaan, and take your father and your households, and come to me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land. Now you are commanded to do this, take your wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.* Benjamin was his full brother, so he loved him best, and gave him most.

23, 24. *And to his father he sent after this manner; ten donkeys laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she donkeys laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. So he sent his brothers away, and they departed: and he said to them, See that you do not become troubled by the way.* This was a sure sign that Joseph knew his brothers and they might well recognize him even by that precept, for their consciences must have told them that it had been their common habit to become troubled either with or without reason, so he bids them not to do so.

20-28. *And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan to Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said.* See how quickly the Patriarch changes from Jacob into Israel? When his spirit if revived, he becomes Israel!

28. *It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

Now we are going to read in the Gospel according to John, the fifth chapter, beginning at the 24th verse.

John 5:24. *Verily, verily, I say to you, He that hears My word, and believes in Him that sent me, has everlasting life*—If we truly believe the Word of Christ and trust in Him who sent His Son into the world, we have at this moment everlasting life!

24. *And shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life.* What a grand verse this is! It is worthy to be written in letters of gold

at every street corner! Would that we all knew the fullness of its meaning by heartfelt experience!

25-30. *Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and has given Him authority to execute judgement, also, because He is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. I can of Myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not My own will, but the will of the Father which has sent Me.* Christ as Mediator did the will of the Father and yet, also did His own will, for His will was always the same as His Father's!

31. *If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.* He did bear witness to Himself by His miracles, but that was not the witness upon which He relied, nor was it the only witness to the truth of His mission.

32-40. *There is another that bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. You sent to John, and he bore witness to the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that you might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and you were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, which has sent Me, has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. And you have not His Word abiding in you: for whom He has sent, Him you believe not. Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me, that you might have life.* They were great Bible-readers, great students of the letter, but they would not come to Christ and, therefore, the Scriptures, themselves, became a sepulcher in which they were entombed.

41-44. *I receive not honor from men. But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in My Father's name, and you receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, which receive honor, one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?* Some men find it difficult to believe in Christ because they are always seeking honor for themselves. Desire for the praise of men often blinds the mind and prejudices the spirit. How boldly our great Master speaks! There is no flattery on His lips. He is the faithful and true Witness, the very Word of God! Oh, that all men would give heed to His message!

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

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

THE BEST OF ALL—GOD IS WITH US
NO. 2471

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 23, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1886.

"Is not the LORD your God with you?"
1 Chronicles 22:18.

WHILE we were reading this chapter you must all have been struck with the melting of one man's life into another. Here is David most anxious about the building of the Temple at Jerusalem—he is not permitted to erect it, himself, and, therefore, he sets to work with diligent care to gather together the gold and the silver, the brass and the iron, the timber and the stone that would be required. He also instructed the workmen who would be needed so that, when he was gone, and his son, Solomon, had ascended the throne, the Temple might be built. Did David live in vain? Can it be truly said that he failed in the grandest project of his life? Assuredly not! He did all that he was *permitted* to do and, by making those elaborate preparations, he was really the means of the building of the Temple.

Let every man and every woman among us judge of our life, not merely from that little narrow piece of it which we, ourselves, live, for that is but a span, but let us judge it by its connection with *other lives* that may come after our own! If we cannot do all we wish, let us do all we *can*, in the hope that someone who shall succeed us may complete the project that is so dear to our heart. That is a blessed prayer which Moses wrote in the 90th Psalm, "Let your work appear to your servants, and your glory to their children." We shall be quite satisfied to do the work and scarcely see the glory if we may but know that in another generation the work that we shall have done shall produce glory to God which shall be seen among the sons of men! No, Elijah, you must not do all the Lord's work—but your mantle must fall upon Elisha and with it shall come a double portion of your spirit—and he shall work twice as many miracles as you did and shall do greater things for the Lord God of Israel!

I do not think it ought ever to be any question of ours what people will do after we are dead and gone. The God who did very well without us, before we were born, will do very well without us after we are dead! It is enough for us to do to-day's work in the day—let somebody else do to-morrow's work if we are not spared to do it. Today do that which comes to your hand and be not dreaming of the future. Put down that telescope—you have nothing to do with peering into the next hundred years! The important matter is not what you spy with your eyes, but what you *do* with your hands! Do it, and do it at once, with all your might, believing that God will find somebody else to go on with the next piece of the work when you have finished your portion.

There is also another delightful thought, here, and that is the continuity of the Divine blessing. God was with David in the gathering together of the great stores of treasure for the building of the Temple, but then God was also with Solomon. Oh, what a mercy it is that God did not give all His Grace to other people before we came into the world! The God of Grace did not empty the whole horn of Grace upon the head of Whitefield or Wesley! He did not pour out all the blessings of His Spirit upon Romaine and John Newton, so as to leave nothing for us! No, and to the end of time He will be the same God as He was yesterday and as He is today. There is no break in the Lord's blessing—He has not ceased to be gracious—His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that He cannot hear. God buries His workmen, but His work goes on and He, the Great Worker, wearies not of it, nor shall He ever fail or be discouraged! All His everlasting purposes shall be accomplished and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Therefore, let us be of good heart if we have been apt to look upon the future with fear. The Lord Jesus still lives and He will take care that His Church shall live and work on until He, Himself, shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God!

This text seems to me, dear Friends, to have a very immediate bearing upon ourselves. David is talking to Solomon and the princes of Israel about the building of a temple. *We* are not building a material temple, but we are building a *spiritual* temple. We do not believe in gorgeous architecture, nor in the expenditure of needless gold and silver upon the house wherein we meet to worship God, for we still hear our Lord and Master say, "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. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." We sing with Cowper—

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

We believe that God is as much present beneath the blue sky, and out there in the street, as He is in any kind of building that we can erect for Him. It is very amazing that as soon as the Temple was built, true religion began to decline—the day when Solomon opened it was the culmination of the glory of true godliness in Israel—and from that hour it began to darken down into an awful night! Yet it was proper that there should be a Temple which, in its magnificence, should call for the respect of men towards God, being typical of that far greater Temple not made with hands, even the glorious Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We, however, are engaged in the building of a temple in a *spiritual* sense. God has sent His servants into the world to gather together for His beautiful house, stones hewn out of the quarry of nature to be shaped, polished and prepared for building into the Temple of His Grace. The Church is the living Temple of God, "exceedingly magnificent." It is a wondrous idea that men's hearts and souls can be blended together and built up into a spiritual Temple wherein God will dwell. This Temple is to be built of stones taken from the quarry of nature and, God being with

us, you and I are to go out and to hew out and shape and prepare the stones for the building of this house of the Lord which shall endure forever.

In order to do this, we certainly need the Presence and the help of God, for what can we do without Him? In the work of conversion, what can be done without the Spirit of God? I would like anybody who thinks he can convert another person without Divine help, to try and do it, and see what a wretched failure he will make of it, or what a dire hypocrisy he will produce by his apparent success! We must have God with us for this work—we cannot create a spark of Grace—how, then, can we create a new heart and a right spirit? Conversion is an absolute creation, regeneration is a miracle of Divine Grace, the works of the Spirit of God—and altogether beyond our power! We need the Spirit of God to aid us in the building of a Temple for God, but, Brothers, with the Lord's Presence, we can do it!

The text says, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" I will go any length with the Brother who likes to preach upon the incapacity of man, the utter and entire weakness of the creature apart from the Creator. You cannot, I think, exaggerate there, but do not always keep dwelling upon your own weakness—remember that when you are weak, you are strong if you do but fall back upon the Omnipotence of God! "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Has He sent us into the world with the Gospel and will He not be with us in the preaching of it? Has He sent us to be the means of seeking souls and made our hearts to ache because of the sins that men have committed against Him—and will He not be with us? Do not let us talk as if we had to live and labor without our God! We have been brought to know Him, we have been made members of the mystical body of Christ. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, if we are what we profess to be—the Church of the living God—will He not occupy the house that He has built? "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Then, what can be too difficult for you?

Now, dear Friends, I shall treat our text, first, as *an assertion,* for, oftentimes in Scripture, a question is one of the strongest modes of assertion when it is anticipated that to that question there can be no other reply than, "Yes." Secondly, I shall treat it as a *question*, for there are some here to whom it *is* a question—some doubting, trembling ones to whom we must say, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" When I have handled it, first as an assertion, and then as a question, I will briefly use it as an *argument*—"Is not the Lord your God with you?" Therefore, arise and do something! Something great and glorious ought to be done by men who have so Divine a Helper with them!

I. First, then, this is AN ASSERTION.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the Lord our God is with us! I do not entertain any doubt upon that point and I hope you do not. Is the Lord your God? Is He your God by a holy Covenant? Have you entered into bonds of fellowship with Him? Have you taken Him to be your God by trust, by love and by the consecration of your body, soul and spirit to Him? Can you say of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, "This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even to death"? Very well, then, if He is your God, He is with you. Do you ask how I know that?

Well, I know it, first, because *He has pledged Himself to be with His people.* "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Is not the Lord your God with you, then? Assuredly He is, if He keeps His promise! And you do not doubt His fidelity, do you? Can He forget His promise, or, remembering it, will He treat it as if it were mere verbiage, words without meaning? There are men who can do that, we know—but does God act so? Can you suppose it possible? No, not for an instant! Then, as He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," He will keep His word! We say, "Never is a long day," and so it is, for it covers all time. And the Lord has said, "I will never leave you"—in poverty, in sickness, in slander and reproach, in depression of spirit, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." He has pledged Himself to this and God forbid that we should, for even a moment, doubt that He will keep His word! To Believers in their Church capacity, there is a pledge given by the blessed Lord Jesus, Himself, which refers especially to His work—"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen."

"Lo, I am with you," says Christ! As much as to say, "Not only do I *promise* to be with you, but I *am* with you, I am already fulfilling My promise to you! For the past, for the present and for the future, 'Lo, I am with you always.'" Let not any Church of God hesitate to answer this question, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" If He is your God, He is with you as individuals and He is *especially* with you as a Christian community going forth to preach His Gospel to every creature! That ought to be enough, surely? He has pledged Himself to be with us.

Next, *He is pleased to be with us.* It is the good pleasure of God to be with His people. He is our Father and do not fathers love to be with their children? The loving father says, when he has little ones at home, "I will get back from my business early that I may spend my evening with the family." We feel ourselves happiest when, laying aside external cares, we leave the world and rest with our loved ones at home. And so is God at home with His people! As a Father, He delights in His children. Remember how Divine Wisdom said, "My delights were with the sons of men." It is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but God takes a great deal more pleasure in us than we do in Him! Yet there seems in us nothing that can give Him pleasure, while in Him there is everything that can afford us delight. The Lord so loves His people that He is never far away from them. You know that dear relationship into which our Lord has entered with His Church—she is His bride, He loves her as He loves His own soul! In some respects, He loves her better than He loves Himself, for He gave Himself for her, and do you think that He is happy away from His bride, His spouse? It is not so! He says to her, "Let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice and your countenance is comely." And whenever she calls for Him, saying, "Let my Beloved come into His garden," His quick answer is, "I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse."

He so loves us that when we shut the door against Him, He stands and knocks and cries to us, "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled, for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night." Do not think that He has gone from you when He loves you so as your Father and as the Husband of your soul! Moreover, He will be with His Church in her work because her work is His work—and wherever there is a heart on the earth, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, in sympathy and harmony with the heart of Christ, depend upon it—He is assuredly there, for that sympathy and that harmony are created by His very Presence. Well, then, as He has pledged Himself and He is, Himself, pleased to be with His people, we believe the assertion which is implied in the enquiry, "Is not the Lord your God with you?"

I hope also, beloved Brothers and Sisters, we can say that *we have had proofs that God is with us.* In this house we have had many plain proofs of the Lord's Presence. If you could have been with me last Tuesday week and the Tuesday before that, it might have made your hearts ring for joy! All the bells of your soul would have given forth blessed chimes as you heard how God had saved one and another who had strolled in here as if by accident, and others who had come in great heaviness of heart, but who, here, found the Lord! Our ministry is nothing, but the Lord makes it something! He makes it everything to many souls and, blessed be His name for that! And you, Brothers and Sisters, in your labor and service for the Master, have brought many souls to Christ. Therefore I say to you, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Assuredly He is, or you would not have beheld all this blessedness!

The Lord has proved His Presence with us by preserving us in the hour of temptation. Some of you who have been lately converted to God have had very fierce temptations since then. In this wicked city our young people—but I do not know that I need say *only* our young people—have been exposed to a furnace of temptation which has been seven times heated! The days in which we live are grievous to the last degree and if the Lord had not been with us, our soul would not have escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler! Often our feet have well-near slipped and we would have fallen if the Lord had not been with us to preserve us. "Is not the Lord your God with you" when you have been kept alive with death so near? Assuredly He is!

Some of you also know that the Lord is with you because you have been so greatly comforted in time of trouble. A Sister said to me, the other day, "I could not have thought that I could have lived through the bereavements I have lately endured. When I used to think of the possibility of my husband's death, it seemed to me that I must die with him." Yet she is not dead and she does not despair—though she had to endure that bereavement and another as well, she said, "Oh, how good God was to me to sustain me as He did!" "Is not the Lord your God with you?" I know some dear friends who have experienced very great temporal trouble through heavy losses in these trying times, yet they are as happy as when they had 10 times as much! The little birds still sing at the window, the blue sky hovers overhead and the heart's-ease still grows in their garden—and they love it well. Yes, dear Friends, the comforts that God gives us in times of deep trouble are a sufficient proof that He is with us!

Beside that, there have been times when we have been in the House of Prayer, or when we have been alone in our chamber, yes, in the middle of the night, sometimes, when pain has kept us from sleeping—when we have felt that we did not need to sleep—for we have been flooded with delight! Did you ever feel that deep calm which sometimes comes over a Believer when there seems to be no evil in the world, when we could not *invent* a doubt if we tried? When we could not have a dark thought concerning our Lord? After our Savior had been tempted in the wilderness, angels came and ministered to Him. Do you know what that experience is when there seem to be angels upstairs, downstairs and all through the house ministering to you? And your life seems set to the tune of a gentle Psalm and, instead of the sound of the trumpet calling you to battle, there is only the dulcet music of an instrument of 10 strings praising the God who has given you rest? So, when the question is put, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" you can answer, "Yes, that He is, and blessed be His holy name!"

Oh, what a blessing it is to live with a present God! If anyone says to me that there is no God, he might as well tell me that there is no air! I cannot see it, but I know that I am living in it, and that I could not live without it, so, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." The Lord is Life, Light, Love, Liberty and All in All to some of us. "Is not the Lord your God with you?" is no question to *us*, for we know that He *is* with us and we glorify His holy name that it is so!

II. Now, secondly, we must devote a few minutes to those poor weary souls to whom this is A QUESTION—"Is not the Lord your God with you?"

"Oh," says one, "I have no joy! I have very little rest! I nave nothing but trouble—deep calls to deep at the noise of his waterspouts and I am so weak, so feeble, so faint, I cannot imagine that the Lord is with me! I see no signs of His Presence, neither do I perceive even a star of hope amid the dense darkness of the night." Listen, dear Friend, have you taken Him to be your God? Are you trusting Him? Are you determined to rely on nothing but the finished work of Christ? Then He *is* with you though you do not perceive His Holy Spirit—in the deepest darkness He is with you!

If the Lord had not been with you, *your despondency might have become despair*. If He had not been with you, your despair might have gone still further. You are yet alive, remember! You have not laid violent hands upon yourself, as you might have done if you had been left to yourself. God is with you, keeping you, even while you live on the very brink of despair. I know that there are some here who were sure God was with them in their darkness because it did not grow any darker. It was a black night, but still, it was not altogether dark—there was a gleam of light left. Ah, yes, it was your gracious Lord who gave you that little ray of hope!

Tell me, sad Heart, what is it that causes you to hate sin and makes you so wretched without the Presence of the Savior? It is because *you have His Presence though you do not know it*. You have, perhaps, seen your boy play with a magnet and a needle—the needle is above the table and the magnet, though out of sight, acts upon it—the needle *feels* the attraction of the magnet and moves after it. and those desires, those

groans, those cries, that inward anguish, that self-despair, that horror of great darkness—all these *prove* that God is secretly working with you and drawing you to Himself. He is with you and if you take Him afresh to be your God—if you come and trust in His promises, I should not wonder but that, even now, your midnight shall burst into a glorious meridian! The Lord send it to you right speedily! Only, rest in Him.

The Lord is not far from any of us—a cry will fetch Him—He will hear even a groan and He will quickly come to the rescue of those who call upon Him. Do but trust Him, do but take Him to be yours and then He cannot leave you! "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." There is such love in God's heart towards the very feeblest of His people that He *cannot* turn away from them! Mother, is it not so in your family, that the child who is most ill, most weak, most full of pain, is the one who is best remembered by you? While you have been sitting here, this evening, you have not thought of John and Thomas, who have grown up and gone out into the world, and are strong and healthy, but you have thought of poor little Jane, whose spine is injured, or of the little boy who has to lie still so many hours a day and who suffers so much. I am sure that while I have been preaching, your thoughts have been trotting home to that dear child and you have been thinking much of him. Well, remember that, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

And remember, also, how the Lord takes the mother's part as well as the father's and says, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." These are cheering Truths of God for those who raise the question! I wish they could enable you to get rid of that question and to know assuredly that the Lord is with you. I remember how Mr. Joseph Irons used to say of some who were always hoping, "It is all very well to have hope, but do not keep on hoping and hoping, or hopping and hopping, but put both feet down and begin to run." I trust you may do the same and get beyond the "hoping" and the "hopping" to the full assurance of faith—

"And are You with us, gracious Lord,
To dissipate our fear?
Do You proclaim Yourself our God,
Our God forever near?"

Then, as Doddridge continues to sing—

"Why droop our hearts, why flow our eyes,
While such a voice we hear?
Why rise our sorrows and our fears,
While such a Friend is near?"

III. Our last point is that here is AN ARGUMENT—"Is not the Lord your God with you?"

It is a reason for us to *arise and be doing something*. You observe how it is put in the 16th verse, "Arise therefore, and be doing something, and the Lord shall be with you"—so it is in the original. Let all true Christian people arise and be doing something, because the Lord is with them! Perhaps, I need not say much to my own people about that matter, for most of you are doing what you can for your Lord. There is a Brother who is going out to Australia—when he came to bid me farewell, he gave me a

little sketch of his life during his 23 years here. It has been a time of incessant activity in the Church and he said to me, "Yes, Sir, you drove me out to work for Christ. You would not let me be idle. You said, 'The worst kind of lazy people are lazy Christians.' And you also said, 'To come here twice on a Sunday and hear me preach, and to be doing nothing for the Master, is not at all the right thing.'" Then the good man added, "I do not often get to hear you, now. I have been secretary of a Sunday school for some time and I often go out preaching, so I cannot come to the Tabernacle."

I delight in so many of the members not coming to hear me because they are doing the Master's work elsewhere! I know that in many churches the main thing is to sit down in a corner pew and be fed. Well, of course, every creature needs to be fed—from the pig upwards! You must excuse my mentioning that unclean animal, for he is the creature whose principal business is to eat and he is not a nice creature at all—and I do not at all admire Christian people whose one business is to eat and eat! Why, I have heard them even grumble at a sermon that was meant for the conversion of sinners because they thought there was no food for them in it! They are great receptacles of food, but, dear Christian people, do not any of you live merely to eat—not even on heavenly food! If God is with you, as you say He is, then get to His work!

"What shall I do?" asks one. That is no business of *mine*—you have to find work for yourself! He who works for God does not need to go to this man, or that man and enquire, "What shall I do?" Why, do the first thing that comes to hand, but get to work for your Master! Many Christians live in country villages where there is no preaching of the Gospel—then, preach it yourself, Brother! "Oh, but I could not!" Well then, get somebody who can! "But we have no Chapel," says one. What do you need with a Chapel on these bright days? Preach on the village green, where the old trees that were cut down a year or two ago are still lying and will serve for seats. "I could not preach," says one, "I would break down." That would be a capital thing to do—break-down sermons are often the best for breaking down other people as well as the preacher! Some of the greatest enterprises in the world have sprung from very little causes—the forest of the mightiest oaks in the world was once only a handful of acorns! Oh, that we might all do what we can for Him who laid down His life for us and who still continues to abide in us, to be our joy and our strength!

David also exhorted these people to *set their hearts upon what they had to do*—"Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." Oh, how much there is of our religion that is a kind of celestial going to sleep! The preacher preaches as if he had not really awakened yet—and the people hear in the same fashion! Are there not, even in our Churches, many who, if a guinea were to jingle, would be sufficiently wide awake to look for it—but when the Gospel is being preached, they are not thoroughly awakened? As to speaking to strangers and saying a word for the Master, that has not yet occurred to them!

"I do not know what I can do," says one. Brother, *if the text is true, I do not now know what you cannot do!* The text says, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" "Well, I could not." "Could not—could not"—do you put

God and "could not" together? I think it would be infinitely better to put God and, "can," or God and, "shall," together! If God is with us, what can be impossible, what can be even *difficult* for us? God being with His people, "he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them."

I cannot speak longer to you, nor is there any need that I should do so. If you Christians will all go out and seek to save sinners, you will be prolonging my sermon—not only for a few minutes, but for many a day and many a year to come! God be with you, Brothers and Sisters, in this holy service! And if any to whom I am speaking are obliged to say, "No, God is *not* with *me*, I am not saved," remember that the way of salvation is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ! If you trust Him, He is with you and you are saved, for, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." God is with you if you are trusting Him—and you may go forth in His might to serve the Lord who has redeemed you! God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46 (VERSION II), 338, 766.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CHRONICLES 21:7-30; 22.

Chapter 21:7. *And God was displeased with this thing.* This numbering of Israel which David had carried out in spite of Joab's protest—"God was displeased with this thing."—

7-15. *Therefore He smote Israel. And David said to God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech You, do away the iniquity of Your servant; for I have done very foolishly. And the LORD spoke to Gad, David's Seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus says the LORD, I offer you three things: choose one of them, that I may do it to you. So Gad came to David, and said to him, Thus says the LORD, Choose you either three years famine; or three months to be destroyed before your foes, while that the sword of your enemies overtakes you; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise yourself what word I shall bring again to Him that sent me. And David said to Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hands of the LORD; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hands of man. So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and He repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now your hand.* See the power of the mercy of God? Even when the angel has drawn his sword and is already executing the Lord's just judgments, God's mercy interposes and holds back the blade of death. Should we not love the Lord for His great long-suffering toward us? "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

15, 16. *And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between the earth and the Heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel,*

who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. This was the very best clothing and the very best posture for men who were under the chastising hand of God! They had put on sackcloth and they had fallen upon their faces. O guilty Sinner, if God's sword of vengeance is drawn against you, you cannot do better than put sackcloth upon your soul, if not upon your body, and prostrate yourself before the Most High!

17. *And David said to God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that has sinned and done evil, indeed, but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray You, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Your people, that they should be plagued.* Here we see David at his best—and what a true patriot he is! He interposes himself, willing, rather, that *he* should be destroyed than that the people should die. This was the spirit of Moses when he said to the Lord, "If you will forgive their sin…but if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written." And this was the spirit of Paul when he wrote, "I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." There are times when our great love for others will overflow all bounds of moderation—when we shall say, and say from our hearts—what we would not have *dared* to utter in cooler moments!

18-27. *Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD. And Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein to the LORD: you shall grant it to me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Ornan said to David, Take it to you, and let my lord the king do that which is good is his eyes: lo, I give you the oxen, also, for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all. And king David said to Ornan, No; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD, and He answered him from Heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.* See what was done by David's intercession and sacrifice? And remember that there is a greater David who, with a richer Sacrifice and mightier intercession, sheathes the sword of God, so that His people are spared!

28-30. *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.*

Chapter 22:1. *Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.* From that moment this place was set apart as the site of the future temple and the center of the hopes of the people of God. And, dear Friends, what better site could have been selected than the spot where the angel sheathed his sword, where prayer was heard and where sacrifice was accepted? And now, today, you and I have only one Temple, and that Temple is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Well-Beloved, for in Him the sword is sheathed! In Him the Sacrifice is accepted and in Him intercession still prevails!

2-4. *And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel and he set masons to hew worked stones to build the House of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joints and brass in abundance without weight; also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.* See, a great deliverance brings a great offering! Because God had bid the angel sheath his sword, there is to be a Temple commenced and David is busy preparing for it. O you who have been saved from death and Hell, what can you render to God for all His benefits toward you?

5. *And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.* If he might not build the Temple, he would, at least, gather the materials for it. So, let us try to do all we can in the cause of God. There is said to have been a king who felt so grateful to God for some special favor that he determined to build a great temple and pay for it all himself—no one was to help at all in it. One night, in his dreams, he was told that the honor of building that temple would not belong to him as he desired, and he thought within himself, "To whom, then, can it be, for I have not allowed any person to work for me without full wage and I have done it all?" At last he discovered that there was a poor woman in his kingdom who also loved his God and, not daring to help in the temple building, she had brought little handfuls of hay to give to the horses that had dragged the stones, so hers was to be the greater honor! If you may not do all you would, do all you *can*, for God will accept it of you if it is rendered by a willing mind and a loving heart.

6-9. *Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD GOD of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My Son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house to the name of the LORD my God; but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, You have shed blood abundantly and have made great wars: you shall not build an house to My name because you have shed much blood upon the earth in My sight. Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon—* That is, peaceful, or peaceable—

9-14. *And I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.*

Now, my Son, the LORD be with you; and prosper you, and build the house of the LORD your God, as He has said of you. Only the LORD give you wisdom, and understanding, and give you charge concerning Israel, that you take heed to fulfill the statues and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed. Now, behold in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber, also, and stone have I prepared; and you may add thereto. At the very lowest calculation, David had laid up eighteen millions of money for the building of this house for the Lord! It was an enormous sum and he must have been long in saving it, yet he gives Solomon leave to increase it—"You may add thereto." I like that way of putting the matter! And when some of you see good help rendered to the cause of God by others who are able to do more than you can, do not, therefore, say, "I need not give anything," but remember what David said to Solomon, "You may add thereto." There is room in the treasury of God for your mite us well as David's millions!

15. *Moreover there are workmen with you in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.* God will always find the right man in time for His own work! In His Church there are "all manner of cunning men for every manner of work."

16-19. *Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing something, and the LORD be with you. David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon, his son, saying, Is not the LORD your God with you? And has He not given you rest on every side? For He has given the inhabitants of the land into my hands and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before His people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God. Arise and build the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.*

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

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

THE BEST OF THE BEST
NO. 2472

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 5, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 19, 1881.

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."
Song of Solomon 2:1.

THE time of flowers has come and as they are in some faint degree, emblems of our Lord, it is well, when God thus calls, that we should seek to learn what He desires to teach us by them. If nature now spreads out her roses and her lilies, or prepares to do so, let us try not only to see them, but to see Christ as He is shadowed forth in them. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." If these are the words of the Well-Beloved—and I have no doubt that they are—then it may be suggested by some that here we have the Savior praising Himself—and it is true—but in no unworthy sense, for well may He praise Himself since no one else can do it as it should be done! There is no human language that can ever set forth His beauties as they deserve to be told. As good John Berridge says—

"Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ"

as He should be spoken of. He will never fully be described unless He shall describe Himself. For certain, we should never have known God if He had not revealed Himself—and every good thing that you or I know of Him, He, Himself, has told us. We make no discoveries of God except as God discovers Himself to us. If, then, any quibblers were to find fault with the Christ of God because He commends Himself, I would answer, Does not God commend Himself and must not His well-beloved Son do the same? Who else is there that can possibly reveal Him to us unless He unveils His own face to our admiring gaze?

Moreover, let it always be remembered that human self-praise is evil because of the motive which underlies it. When we praise ourselves—and, alas, that we should be so foolish as to do so—we do it out of pride! But when Christ praises Himself, He does it out of *humility*. "Oh," you say, "how can you *prove* that to be true?" Why, thus—He praises Himself that He may win our love—but what *condescension* it is on His part that He should care about the love of such insignificant and undeserving persons as we are! It is a wonderful stoop that the Christ of God should speak about having a *bride* and that He should come to seek His bride among the sons of men! If princes were to look for consorts among beggars, that would be, after all, but a small stoop, for God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth. But for Christ to forsake the thrones and glories of Heaven, and the splendors of

His Father's courts above to come down to win a well-beloved one here and, for her sake, to take upon Himself her nature—and in her nature to bear the shame of death, even the death of the Cross—this is stupendous condescension of which only God, Himself, is capable! And this praising of Himself is a part of that condescension—a necessary means of winning the love of the heart that He has chosen.

So this is a matchless instance, not of pride, but of *humility*, that those dear lips of the heavenly Bridegroom should have to speak to His own commendation and that He should say, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." O human lips, why are you silent, so that Christ must speak about Himself? O human hearts, why are you so hard that you will never feel until Christ, Himself, shall address you? O human eyes, why are you so blind that you shall never see till Christ shows Himself in His own superlative light and loveliness? I think I need not defend my Master, though He used these sweet emblems to set forth Himself, for this is an instance, not of His pride, but of His humility.

It is also an instance of the Master's wisdom, for as it is His design to win hearts to Himself, He uses the best means of winning them. How are hearts won? Very often by the exhibition of beauty. Love at first sight has been begotten by the vision of a lovely countenance. Men and women, too, are struck with affection through the eyes when they perceive some beauty which charms and pleases them. So the Savior lifts the corner of the veil that conceals His glories and lets us see some glimpse of His beauty in order that He may win our hearts. There are some who seem to think that they can bully men to Christ, but that is a great mistake. It is very seldom that sinners can be driven to the Savior—His way is to *draw* them. He Himself said, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." And the drawings of Christ are not, as it were, with a cart rope, but with silken bonds, yes, with invisible chains, for His beauty is of such a character that it creates love! His beauty is so attractive that it draws the heart! So, in infinite wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ sets forth His own beauties that He may, thereby, win our hearts.

I believe that there is no preaching like the exaltation of Christ Crucified. There is nothing so likely to win the sons of men as a sight of Him and if God, the Holy Spirit, will but help all His ministers, and help all His people to set forth the beauties of Christ, I shall not doubt that the same Spirit will incline men's hearts to love Him and to trust Him! Note, then, the condescension and also the wisdom which are perceptible in this self-commendation on the part of Christ—"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

I think that our Lord also speaks thus as an encouragement to timid souls. His tender familiarity in praising Himself to us is one of the most effectual proofs of His lowliness. Does Christ commend Himself to us? Does He say to us, for instance, "I am meek and lowly in heart"? What is His objective in speaking thus but that we may take His yoke upon us and may learn of Him and find rest to our souls? And if He says, "I am the rose of Sharon," what does He mean but that we may pluck Him and

take Him for our own? If He says, "I am the lily of the valleys," why does He take the trouble to tell us that but because He wants us to *take* Him and to *have* Him for our very own? I think that it is so sweet of Christ to praise Himself in order to show that He longs for us to come to Him! He declares Himself to be a fountain of living water, but why is He a fountain but that we may come to Him and drink? He tells us, "I am the bread which came down from Heaven," but why does He speak of Himself as bread, except that if a man eats, he shall never hunger? Why, because He wants us to partake of Him! You need not, therefore, be afraid that He will refuse you when you come to Him. If a man praises his wares, it is that he may sell them. If a doctor advertises his cures, it is that sick folk may be induced to try his medicine. And when our Lord Jesus Christ praises Himself, it is a kind of holy advertisement by which He would tempt us to "come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If He praises Himself, it is that we may fall in love with Him—and we need not be afraid to come and lay our poor hearts at His feet and ask Him to accept us—for He would not have wooed us by unveiling His beauties if He had meant, after all, to trample on our hearts, and say, "I care nothing for such poor love as yours."

I feel most grateful, then, that I have not, at this time, so much to praise my Master as to let Him speak His own praises, for, "never man spoke like this Man!" When He commends Himself, what would have been folly in others is wisdom in Him! And whereas we say to our fellow man, "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth," I would say to Christ, "My Master, praise Yourself, for You alone can do it as it ought to be done! As for Your poor servant, he would try to be the echo of Your voice, and that will be infinitely better than anything he, himself, can say."

I think, also, that there is good reason for our Lord to praise Himself in the fashion that He does in our text because, after all, it is not praise. "What?" you ask, "and yet you have been talking all this while as if it *were* praise." Well, so it is in one sense, to us, but it is not to Christ. Suppose the sun were to compare itself with a glowworm—would that be praise? Suppose an angel were to compare himself with an ant, would that be praise? And when my Lord and Master, whose eyes outshine the sun, and who is infinitely higher than the mightiest of the angels, compares Himself to a rose and a lily, is that praise? Well, it is to you and to me, but it certainly cannot be to Him! It is a marvelous stoop for Christ, who is "God over all, blessed forever," and the Light of the universe, to say, "I am a rose; I am a lily." O my blessed Lord, this is a sort of Incarnation, as when the Eternal God did take upon Himself an infant's form! So here, the Everlasting God says, "I am"—and what comes next?—"a rose and a lily." It is an amazing stoop! I know not how to set it forth to you by human language—it is a sort of verbal rehearsal of what He did afterwards when, though He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, "He took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and became obedient to death, even the death of the

Cross." "I am God, yet," He says, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

What does our text mean? I think it means that our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly delightful, so, let us speak, first, of *the exceeding delightfulness of our Lord.* And then, inasmuch as He uses *two* emblems—first the rose, and then the lily—surely this is to express *the sweet variety of His delightfulness.* And, inasmuch as He speaks of Himself as the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, I shall have to show you, in the last place, that this hints to us *the exceeding freeness of His delightfulness.*

I. First, then, the text sets forth THE EXCEEDING DELIGHTFULNESS OF OUR LORD.

He compares Himself, here, not as in other places, to *necessary* bread and refreshing water, but to lovely flowers, to roses and lilies. What is the use of roses and lilies? I know what the use of corn is—I must eat it—it is necessary to me for food. I know why barley and rye and all sorts of roots and fruits are created—they are the necessary food of man or beast. But what do we need with roses? What do we need with lilies? They are of no use at all except for joy and delight. With their sweet form, their charming color and their delicious fragrance, we are comforted and pleased and delighted, but they are not necessaries of life. A man can live without roses—there are millions of people, I have no doubt—who live without possessing lilies of the valley. There are all too few roses and lilies in this smoky Babylon of ours, but, when we do get them, what are their uses? Why, they are things of beauty, if not "a joy forever!"

Jesus is all that and more! He is far more than "a thing of beauty" and, to all who trust Him, He will be "a joy forever." To you who are Christ's people, He is your bread, for you feed on Him and He makes you live! You could not do without Him as the sustenance of your soul. He is the Living Water and your soul would pine and perish of a burning thirst if you did not drink of Him! But that is not all that Jesus is to you—God has never intended to save His people on the scale of the workhouse—to give you just as much as you absolutely need, and nothing more. No, no, no! He means you to have *joy* as well as to have *life*, to look upon beauty as well as to be in safety and to have not only a healthy atmosphere, but an atmosphere that is laden with the odor of sweet flowers! You are to find in Christ roses and lilies, as well as bread and water! You have not yet *seen* all His beauties and you do not yet *know* all His excellence!

The exceeding delightfulness of Christ is suggested to our mind by His declaration, "I am the rose, and I am the lily." And first, *He is, in Himself, the delight of men.* He speaks not of offices, gifts, works, possessions—but of Himself—"I Am." Our Lord Jesus is the best of all beings! The dearest, sweetest, fairest and most charming of all beings that we can think of is the Son of God, our Savior! Come here, you poets who dream of beauty, and then try to sing its praises—but your imagination could never reach up to the matchless perfection of His Person—neither could your sweetest music ever attain to the full measure of His praise! Think of Him as the God-Man, God Incarnate in human nature and absolutely perfect! I was going to say something more than that, for there is not only

in Him all that there ought to be, but there is more than your thoughts or wishes have ever compassed! Eyes need to be trained to see beauty. No man sees half or a *thousandth* part of the beauty, even, of this poor, natural world. But the painter's eyes—the eyes of Turner, for instance—can see much more than you or I ever saw.

"Oh," said one, when he looked on one of Turner's landscapes, "I have seen that view every day, but I never saw as much as *that* in it." "No," replied Turner, "don't you wish you could?" And, when the Spirit of God trains and tutors the eyes, they see in Christ what they never saw before. But, even then, as Turner's eyes were not able to see all the mystery of God's beauty in nature, so neither is the most trained and educated Christian able to perceive all the matchless beauty that there is in Christ!

I do not think, Brothers and Sisters, that there is anything about Christ but what should make His people glad. There are dark Truths of God concerning Him, such as His bearing our sin, but what a joy it is to us that He did bear it and put it away forever! It makes us weep to look at Jesus dying on the Cross, but there is more real joy in the tears of *repentance* than there is in the smiles of worldly mirth. I would choose my Heaven to be a Heaven of everlasting weeping for sin sooner than have a Heaven—if such a Heaven could be—consisting of perpetual laughing at the mirth of fools! There is more true pleasure in mourning before God than in dancing before the devil! Christ is, then, all beauty—even the dark parts in Him are the Light of God—and the bitter parts are sweet. He has only to be seen by you and you must perceive that, whether it is His Godhead or His Manhood. Whether it is His priesthood, His royalty, or His prophetic office. Whether it is on the Cross or on the Throne. Whether it is on earth, or in Heaven, or in the Glory of His Second Coming, every way—

"All over glorious is my Lord,
Must be beloved, and yet adored.
His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole earth would love Him too."

But, next, our Lord is *exceedingly delightful to the eyes of faith.* He not only tells us of what delight is in Himself—"I am the rose, and I am the lily"—but He thereby tells us that there is something to see in Him, for the rose is very pleasing to look upon. Is there a more beautiful sight than a rose that is in bud, or even one that is full blown? And the lily—what a charming thing it is! It seems to be more a flower of Heaven than of earth! Well now, Christ is delightful to the eyes of faith. I remember the first time I ever saw Him—I shall never forget that sight—and, by His Grace, I have seen Him many times since, but my grief is that I ever take my eyes off Him, for it is to look away from the sun into blackness! It is to look away from bliss into misery! To you who look at Christ by faith, a sight of Him brings such peace, such rest, such hope, as no other sight can ever afford—it so sweetens everything, so entirely takes away the bitterness of life and brings us to anticipate the glory of the life that is to come, that I am sure you say—"Yes, yes, the figure in the text is quite correct, there is a beauty in Jesus to the eyes of faith! He is, indeed, red as the rose and white as the lily."

And, next, the Lord Jesus Christ is *delightful in the savor which comes from Him to us*. In Him is a delicious, varied, abiding fragrance which is very delightful to the spiritual nostril. Smell is, I suppose, a kind of delicate feeling—minute particles of certain substances touch sensitive membranes—and we call the sensation that is produced, *smelling*. It is a mysterious sense. You can understand sight and hearing better than you can understand smelling. There is a spiritual way of perceiving the savor of Christ—I cannot explain it to you, but there is an ineffable mysterious sweetness that proceeds from Him which touches the spiritual senses and affords supreme delight—and as the body has its nose, and its tender nerves that can appreciate sweet odors, so the soul has its spiritual nostril by which, though Christ is at a distance, it yet can perceive the fragrant emanations that come from Him and is delighted therewith!

What is there that comes from Christ, from day to day, but His Truth, His Spirit, His influence, His promises, His doctrines, His words of cheer? All these have a heavenly sweetness and make us, with the Psalmist, say to our Lord, "All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad." Whenever these sweet odors are wafted down to us, they also make us glad—anything that has the savor of Christ in it is sweet to a Christian! If Christ has touched it, let me put it in my bosom and keep it there as a sweet forget-me-not until I see His face in Glory! Yes, the very stones He sat on—I was about to say the very mountains at which He *looked*—have become dear to us! We have no idolatrous or superstitious reverence for Palestine, or even for the garden in which He sweat great drops of blood, but for *spiritual* things with which He has to do, we have a never-ceasing reverence and affection. Everything that comes from Him is wondrous as the songs of the angels must have been to the shepherds of Bethlehem—and sweet to the taste as the manna that dropped from the skies around Israel's desert camp. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, there is a sweet savor about the Lord Jesus Christ! Do you all perceive it?

Once more, *in all that He is, Christ is the choicest of the choice*. You notice the Bridegroom says, "I am the rose." Yes, but there were some particularly beautiful roses that grew in the valley of Sharon. "I am that rose," He said. And there were some delightful lilies in Palestine—it is a land of lilies! There are so many of them that nobody knows which lily Christ meant and it does not at all tell us, for almost all lilies are wondrously beautiful. "But," He said, "I am the lily of the valleys." The choicest kind of lily grew where the soil was fat and damp with the overflow of mountain streams. "I am the lily of the valleys," that is to say, Christ is not only good, but He is the best! And He is not only the best, but He is the best of the best! He is a flower—yes, but He is a rose, the queen of flowers—yes, but then He is the best rose there is, He is the rose of Sharon! He is a Savior, and a great one. Yes, the *only* Savior. He is a Husband, but what a Husband! Was there ever such a Bridegroom as Christ Jesus the Lord? He is the Head, but Father Adam was a poor head compared with Him! He is inexpressibly, unutterably, indescribably lovely! I might as well leave off talking about Him, for I cannot hope to set

Him forth as He deserves! If you could but see Him, I would leave off, for I am sure I should be only hanging a veil before Him with the choicest words that I could possibly use!

Suppose you had a dear son, or husband, or friend, far away, and that I was a painter who could carry pictures in my mind's eye, and then draw them to the very life. If I stood here, trying to paint your well-beloved friend, laying on my colors with all the skill I possessed and doing my best to reproduce his features, suppose, while I was at work, that the door at the back was opened and he came in? I would cry out, "Oh, stop, stop, stop! Let me put away my canvas, let me pack up my brushes and my paints. Here is the loved one, himself—look at him! Look at *him*, not at my portrait of him!" And you would rise from your seat and say, "It is he! It is he! You may talk as long as you like, dear Sir, when he is away, but when he is, himself, here, your talk seems but mere chatter." Well, I shall be quite content that you should think so, I shall be even glad if you do, provided that the reason shall be that you can say, "We have seen the Lord. He has manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world." "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." The best of the best, the fairest of the fair, the sweetest of the sweet is Jesus Christ to you and to me if we are, indeed, His people. I cannot say more about the exceeding delightfulness of my Lord. I wish I could.

II. I must pass on, next, to notice THE SWEET VARIETY OF CHRIST'S DELIGHTFULNESS.

He is not only full of joy, pleasure and delight to our hearts, but He is full of all sorts of joy, and all sorts of pleasure, and all sorts of delights to us—

"Nature, to make her beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own."

The rose is not enough. You must also have the lily, and the two together fall far short of the glories of Christ, the true, "Plant of renown."

"I am the rose." That is *the emblem of majesty*. The rose is the very queen of flowers. In the judgment of all who know what to admire, it is enthroned above all the rest of the beauties of the garden. But the lily—what is that? That is *the emblem of love*. The Psalmist hints at this in the title of the 45th Psalm. "Upon Shoshannim, a Song of love." Shoshannim signifies lilies, so the Lily Psalm is the love song, for the lilies, with their beauty, their purity, their delicacy, are a very choice emblem of love! Are you not delighted when you put these two things together, majesty and love? A King upon a throne of love! A Prince, whose very eyes beam with love to those who put their trust in Him, a real Head, united by living bonds of love to all His members—such is our dear Lord and Savior! A rose and yet a lily. I do not know in which of the two I take the greater delight—I prefer to have the two together. When I think that my Savior is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, I shout, "Hallelujah!" But when I remember that He loved me and gave Himself for me and that He still loves me, and that He will keep on loving me forever and ever, there is such a charm in this thought that nothing can excel it! Look at the lily and sing—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,

Let me to Your bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life are past.
Safe into the haven guide
Oh receive my soul at last!"

Then look at the rose and sing—

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

Then put the rose and the lily together and let them remind you of Christ's majesty and love. The combination of these sweet flowers also suggests our Lord's *suffering and purity*—

"White is His soul, from blemish free.
Red with the blood He shed for me."

The rose, with its thorn, reminds us of His suffering, His bleeding love to us, His death on our behalf, His bearing of the thorns which our sin created. Christ is a royal rose beset with thorns, but the lily shows that—

"For sins not His own
He died to atone."

Jesus, when on earth, could say, "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing on Me." The devil himself could not see a spot or speck in that lovely lily! Jesus Christ is perfection, itself! He is all purity, so you must put the two together, the rose and the lily, to show Christ's suffering and perfection, the infinitely pure, infinitely suffering. In which of the two do you take the greater delight? Surely, in neither, but in the combination of both! What would be the value of Christ's sufferings if He were not perfect? And of what use would His perfections be if He had not died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God? But the two together, the rose and the lily, suffering and purity, fill us with delight!

Of both of these there is a great variety. I wonder how many different sorts of roses there are? I would not like to have to tell you! They vary exceedingly—perhaps there are as many kinds as there are days in the year. How many varieties of lilies are there? Possibly, there are as many sorts of lilies as there are of roses, for both of them are wonderfully diversified, but the joys that flow from our Lord Jesus Christ are as abundant and as varied as the roses and the lilies together! Bring me which rose you please and I will tell you that it smells sweet. Bring which lily you choose, and I will say, "Yes, that, also, has a delicate perfume. That will do, *with the rose*, to serve as an emblem of Christ." Our Lord Jesus possesses every kind of beauty and fragrance. "He is all my salvation and all my desire." All good things meet in Christ—in Him all the lines of beauty are focused! Blessed are they who truly know Him.

Further, *Christ is the very essence of the sweetness, both of the rose and of the lily*. When He says, "I am the rose," He means not only that He is like the rose, but that He *made* all the sweetness there is in the rose—and it is still in Him! And all the sweetness there is in *any* creature comes to us from Christ, or else it is not sweetness such as we ought to love. I like to look upon the bread I eat as His gift to me and to bless His

Providential hand that bestows it. I like to look upon all the landscape on such a fair day as this has been, and say, "Christ is in all this, giving this charming view to such a poor, unworthy creature as I am." He is in all there is that is good! He is the goodness of all the good there is! He is the very soul of the universe, whatever there is in the universe that is worthy of our soul's love! All good for our soul comes from Him, whether it is pardon of sin, or justification, or the sanctification that makes us fit for Glory hereafter, Christ is the Source of it all and in the infinite variety of delights that we get from Him, He is, Himself, the essence of it all.

We can become tired of most things. I suppose that we can become tired of everything *earthly*. But we shall never tire of Christ! I remember one who, when near his death hour, forgot even his wife, and she was greatly grieved that he did not recognize her. They whispered in his ear the name of his favorite child, but he shook his head. His oldest friend, who had known him from his boyhood, was not recognized. At last they asked him, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" Then he said, "Ah, yes, and by His Grace I am going to Him!" The ruling passion was strong in death—Christ was nearer and dearer to him than those he loved best on earth! All flowers will fade, even roses and lilies among them, but not this blessed Rose of Sharon and Lily of the valleys!

Christ does not say, "I *was* a rose and I *was* a lily," but, "I *am* the rose, and I am the lily." He is now all that He ever was! And He will be—in life, in death and throughout all eternity to the soul that knows Him—an infinite variety of everything that is delightful!

III. I must now, very briefly, take up the last head of my discourse which is THE EXCEEDING FREENESS OF OUR LORD'S DELIGHTFULNESS.

It is not very pleasant or satisfying for hungry people to stand in the street and hear someone praising a good meal of which they cannot even get a taste. I have often noticed boys standing outside a shop window in which there have been all sorts of dainties—they have flattened their noses against the window—but they have not been able to get anything to eat.

I have been talking about my Master and I want to show you that *He is accessible*, He is meant to be plucked and enjoyed as roses and lilies are! He says in the text, "I am the rose of Sharon." What was Sharon? It was an open plain where anybody might wander and where even cattle roamed at their own sweet will. Jesus is not like a rose in Solomon's garden, shut up within high walls with broken glass all along the top. Oh, no! He says, "I am the rose of Sharon," *everybody's* rose, the flower for the common people to come and gather. "I am the lily." What lily? The lily of the palace of Shushan, enclosed and guarded from all approach? No. but, "I am the lily of the valleys," found in this glen, or the other ravine, growing here, there and everywhere! "I am the lily of the valleys."

Then *Christ is as abundant as a common flower*. Whatever kind of rose it was, it was a common rose. Whatever kind of lily it was, it was a well-known lily that grew freely in the valleys of that land. Oh, blessed be my Master's name, He has brought us a common salvation and He is the

common people's Christ! Men in general do not love Him enough, or else they would have hedged Him in with all sorts of restrictions—they would have made a franchise for Him and nobody would have been able to be saved except those who paid, I know not how much a year in taxes! But they do not love our Lord enough to shut Him in and I am glad they have never tried to do so. There He stands, at the four Cross roads, so that everybody who comes by and wants Him, may have Him! He is a Fountain bearing this inscription, "Let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him of take the Water of Life freely."

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Why do roses grow in Sharon? Why do lilies grow in the valleys? Why, to be plucked, of course! I like to see the children go down into the meadow when it is decked in grass and adorned with flowers—gilded with buttercups, or white with the day's-eyes! I love to see the children pluck the flowers and fill their aprons with them, or make garlands and twist them round their necks, or put them on their heads. "O children, children!" somebody might cry, "do not spoil those beautiful flowers, do not go and pick them." Oh, but they may! Nobody says they may not—they may not go into our *gardens* and steal the geraniums and the fuchsias—but they may get away into the meadows, or into the open fields and pluck these common flowers to their heart's content! And now, poor Soul, if you would like an apron full of roses, come and have them! If you would like to carry away a big handful of the lilies of the valleys, come and take them—as many as you will! May the Lord give you the will! That is, after all, what is needed. If there is that Grace-given will, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys will soon be yours! They are common flowers, growing in a common place, and there are plenty of them—will you not take them?

Even to those who do not pluck any, there is one strange thing that must not be forgotten. A man passes by a rose bush, and says, "I cannot stop to think about roses," but as he goes along, he exclaims, "Dear, dear, what a delicious perfume!" A man journeying in the East goes through a field that is full of lilies. He is in a great hurry, but, for all that, he cannot help seeing and smelling the lilies as he rushes through the field. And, do you know, the perfume of Christ has life in it? He is "a savor of life to life." What does that mean but that the smell of Him will save? Ah, if you do but glance at Him, though you were so busy that you could not come in till the sermon had begun, yet a glance at this Lily will bring you joy and peace, for He is so free that, often, even when men are not asking for Him, He comes to them!

"What?" you say, "is it really so?" Yes, that it is! Such is the freeness of Christ's Grace that it is written, "I am found of them that sought Me not." He sends His sweet perfume into nostrils that never sniffed after it. He puts Himself in the way of eyes that never looked for Him! How I wish that some man who has never sought for Christ might find Him even now! You remember the story that Christ tells of the man that was plowing the field? He was only thinking of the field and how much corn it would take to sow it. He was plowing up and down, when suddenly his

plowshare hit upon something hard. He stopped the oxen and took his spade, and dug, and there was an old crock full of gold! Somebody had hidden it away and left it. This man had never looked for it, for he did not even know it was there, but he had stumbled on it, as men say, by *accident*. What did he do? He did not tell anybody, but he went off to the man who was the owner of the field and he said, "What will you take for that field?" "Can you buy it?" "Yes, I want it. What will you take for it?"

The price was so high that he had to sell the house he lived in, his oxen and his very clothes off his back, but he did not care about that! He bought the field and he bought the treasure. And then he was able to buy back his clothes, his house, his oxen and everything else. If you find Christ and if you have to sell the coat off your back in order to get Him! If you have to give up everything you have that you may find Him, you will have such a treasure in Him that, for the joy of finding Him, you would count all the riches of Egypt to be less than nothing and vanity!

But you need not sell the coat off your back—Christ is to be had for nothing—only you must give Him yourself. If He gives Himself to you and He becomes your Savior, you must give yourself to Him and become His servant. Trust Him, I beseech you! The Lord help you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 8:15-22; JEREMIAH 33:15-26.

Genesis 8:15-21. *And God spoke to Noah, saying, Go out of the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went out and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatever creeps upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savor.* Until then the earth had been obnoxious to Jehovah. He had put it away from Him as a foul thing, drowned beneath the flood. But after the offering of Noah's sacrifice, the Lord smelled "a savor of rest."

21, 22. *And the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground. And any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again strike any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.* Thus we see what we may expect so long as the earth remains, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Now let us read a few verses from Jeremiah's prophecy.

Jeremiah 33:15. *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up to David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.* In the latter days, at the glorious ap-

pointed time, Jesus Christ will grow up like a Branch out of the stem of Jesse. The dynasty of David now seems like a tree cut down, whose stock is buried under the ground, but, "the Branch of Righteousness" shall appear in due time, and Jesus, the Son of David, "shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land."

16. *In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD Our Righteousness.* What a wonderful unity there is between Christ and His Church! She actually takes His name—"The Lord Our Righteousness."

17, 18. *For thus says the LORD; David shall never lack a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel, neither shall the priests, the Levites lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.* This shows that the Covenant was not a literal and fleshly one, made with David and his seed according to the flesh, or with the priests and their seed according to the flesh. There is a Kingdom that can never be moved—and our Lord sits on that Throne. There is a Priesthood which is everlasting, it is held by that great High Priest who has offered one Sacrifice for sins, forever, and who abides a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

19, 22. *And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Thus says the LORD; If you can break My covenant with the day, and My covenant with the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then may also My Covenant be broken with David, My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne, and with the Levites the priests, My ministers. As the host of Heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David, My servant, and the Levites that minister to Me.* So that they are, at this day, the seed of Jesus, the Son of David, who shall count them! And the company of those whom He has made to be kings and priests to God, who but He can number them!

23-26. *Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Consider you not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD has chosen, He has even cast them off? Thus they have despised My people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus says the LORD, If My Covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of Heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David, My servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.* This shall be literally fulfilled in the latter days, I doubt not, but it is even now being fulfilled to the spiritual seed of Jacob and David! The Covenant of Grace is made sure to all the seed, even to as many as have believed on Christ's name.

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AN AWFUL CONTRAST
NO. 2473

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 12, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 11, 1886.

"Then they spat in His face."
Matthew 26:67.

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away."
Revelation 20:11.

GUIDED by our text in Matthew's Gospel, let us first go in thought to the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and there let us, in deepest sorrow, realize the meaning of these terrible words—"Then they spat in His face." There is more of deep and awful thunder in them than in the bolt that bursts overhead. There is more of vivid terror in them than in the sharpest lightning flash—"Then they spat in His face."

Observe that these men, the priests, scribes, elders and their servitors did this shameful deed after they had heard our Lord say, "Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." It was in contempt of this claim, in derision of this honor which He foretold for Himself that, "then they spat in His face," as if they could bear it no longer, that He, who stood to be judged of them, should claim to be their Judge—that He whom they had brought at dead of night from the Garden of Gethsemane as their captive, should talk of coming in the clouds of Heaven—"Then they spat in His face."

Nor may I fail to add that they thus assaulted our Lord after the High Priest had torn his clothes. My Brothers and Sisters, do not forget that the High Priest was supposed to be the representative of everything that was good and venerable among the Jews! The High Priest was the earthly head of their religion. He it was who, alone of mortal men, might enter within the mysterious veil—yet it was he who condemned the Lord of Glory as he tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy." It makes me tremble as I think of how eminent we may be in the service of God and yet how awfully we may be enemies of the Christ of God! Let none of us think that though we clamber up to the highest places in the Church we are, therefore, saved. We may be High Priests and wear the Urim and the Thummim. We may put on the breastplate

with all its wondrous mystic stones and bind around us the curious girdle of the ephod, and yet, for all that, we may be ringleaders in expressing contempt of God and of His Christ!

It was when Caiaphas, the High Priest, had pronounced the word of condemnation against Christ that, "then they spat in His face." God grant that we may never take upon ourselves any office in the Church of God and then, girt about with the authority and influence which such an office might lend to us, be the first to pour derision and contempt upon the Christ of God! Yet I do not hesitate to say that when men look to the earthly priesthood instead of looking to Christ, the Great High Priest. When men are taught to trust in the "mass" instead of trusting in Christ's one Sacrifice for sin upon the Cross, it is *then* that the very priests lead the way in spitting in His face! Antichrist never more surely dwells anywhere than in the place where Christ is thus dishonored—and none do Him such dire disgrace as those who ought to bow at His feet and lift Him high among the sons of men—yet who reject Him and refuse His rightful claims.

"Then they spat in His face," after He had proclaimed His Godhead as King and Judge of all, and after the man who ought to have been His principal earthly servant had turned arch-traitor and led the way in contempt of Him by accusing Him of blaspheming! "Then they spat in His face."

There are two or three thoughts that come to my mind when I think that these wicked men actually spat in Christ's face—in that face which is the light of Heaven, the joy of angels, the bliss of saints and the very brightness of the Father's Glory! This spitting shows us, first, *how far sin will go*. If we need proof of the depravity of the heart of man, I will not point you to the stews of Sodom and Gomorrah, nor will I take you to the places where blood is shed in streams by wretches like Herod and men of that sort. No, the clearest proof that man is utterly fallen and that the natural heart is enmity against God is seen in the fact that they spat in Christ's face, did falsely accuse Him, condemn Him, lead Him out as a malefactor and hang Him up as a felon that He might die upon the Cross! Why, what evil had He done? What was there in His whole life that should give them occasion to spit in His face? Even at that moment, did His face flash with indignation against them? Did He look with contempt upon them? Not He, for He was all gentleness and tenderness even towards these, His enemies, and their hearts must have been hard and brutal, indeed, that, "then they spat in His face."

He had healed their sick. He had fed their hungry. He had been among them a very fountain of blessing up and down Judea and Samaria, and yet, "then they spat in His face." I say again, relate not to me the crimes of ancient nations, nor the horrible evils committed by uncivilized men, nor the more elaborate iniquities of our great cities! Tell me not of the abominations of Greece or Rome—this, this, in the sight of the angels of God and in the eyes of the God of the angels, is the masterpiece of all in-

iquity—"Then they spat in His face." To enter into the King's own palace and draw near to His only-begotten Son—and to spit in His face—this is the crime of crimes which reveals the infamous wickedness of men! Humanity stands condemned of the blackest iniquity now that it has gone as far as to spit in Christ's face!

My meditation also turns towards the Well-Beloved into whose face they spat. And my thought concerning Him is this—*how deep was the humiliation He had to endure*! When He was made sin for us, though He, Himself, knew no sin, when our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the iniquities of His people and was burdened with the tremendous weight of their guilt—it became incumbent upon the justice of God to treat Him as if He were actually a sinner. He was no sinner and He could not be one—He was perfect Man and perfect God—yet He stood in the place of sinners and the Lord caused to meet upon Him the iniquity of all His people! Therefore, in the time of humiliation He must not be treated as the Son of God, neither must He be held in honor as a righteous Man! He must first be given up to shame and to contempt—and then to suffering and to death and, consequently, He was not spared this last and most brutal of insults—"Then they spat in His face." O my Lord, to what terrible degradation are You brought! Into what depths are You dragged through my sin and the sin of all the multitudes whose iniquities were made to meet upon You! O my Brothers, let us hate sin! O my Sisters, let us loathe sin, not only because it pierced those blessed hands and feet of our dear Redeemer, but because it dared even to spit in His face! No one can ever know all the shame the Lord of Glory suffered when they spat in His face.

These words glide over my tongue all too smoothly—perhaps I do not feel them as they ought to be felt—though I would do so if I could. But could I feel as I ought to feel in sympathy with the terrible shame of Christ and then could I interpret those feelings by any language known to mortal man, surely you would bow your heads and blush! And you would feel rising within your spirits a burning indignation against the sin that dared to put the Christ of God to such shame as this! I want to kiss His feet when I think that they spat in His face.

Then, once more, my thoughts run to Him, again, in this way—I think of *the tender Omnipotence of His love*. How could He bear this spitting when, with one glance of His eyes, had He been but angry, the flame might have slain them and withered them all up? Yet He stood still even when they spit in His face! And they were not the only ones who thus insulted Him, for, afterwards, when He was taken by the soldiers into Pilate's hall, they also spat upon Him in cruel contempt and scorn—

"See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."

How could He bear it? Friends, He could not have borne it if He had not been Omnipotent. That very Omnipotence which would have enabled

Him to destroy them was Omnipotence of *love*, as well as Omnipotence of force. It was this that made Him—if I may so say—"restrain Himself," for there is no Omnipotence like that which restrains Omnipotence. Yet so it was that He could endure this spitting from men! Can you think of this marvelous condescension without feeling your hearts all on fire with love for Him, so that you long to do some special act of homage to Him by which you may show that you would gladly pay Him for this shame if you could? I will not say more about that point, for the shameful fact stands indelibly recorded in the Scripture—"Then they spat in His face"—but I want to bring the Truth of God home, Brothers and Sisters, and show you how we may have done to Christ what these wicked men did. "Oh," says one, "I was not there! *I* did not spit in His face." Listen! Perhaps you *have* spat in His face. Perhaps even *you* have spat in His face. You remember that touching hymn that we sometimes sing—

"My Jesus! Say what wretch has dared
Your sacred hands to bind?
And who has dared to buffet so
Your face so meek and kind?
My Jesus! Whose the hands that wove
That cruel thorny crown?
Who made that hard and heavy Cross
That weighs Your shoulders down?
My Jesus! Who with spittle vile
Profaned Your sacred brow?
Or whose unpitying scourge has made
Your precious blood to flow?
'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Your sweet mercy's sake!"

There are still some who spit in Christ's face by *denying His Godhead*. They say, "He is a mere man—a good man, it is true, but only a man." How they dare say that, I cannot make out, for he would be no good man who claimed to be God if he were not God! Jesus of Nazareth was the basest of impostors who ever lived if He permitted His disciples to worship Him and if He left behind Him a life which compels us to worship Him! If He were not really and truly God, then of all those who declare that He is not God—and there is a very great company of them even among the nominally religious people of the present day, we must sorrowfully, but truthfully say, "Then they spat in His face."

They also do the same who *rail at His Gospel*. There are many, in these days, who seem as if they cannot be happy unless they are tearing the Gospel to pieces. Especially is that Divine mystery of the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ the mark for the arrows of these wise men, I mean those who are wise according to the wisdom of this world. We delight to know that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the place of His people—

"He bore that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

Yet I have read some horrible things which have been written against that blessed doctrine and, as I read them, I could only say to myself, "Then they spat in His face." If there is *anything* that is beyond all else, the Glory of Christ, it is His atoning Sacrifice! And if ever you thrust your finger into the very apple of His eye and touch His honor in the most tender possible point, it is when you have anything to say against His offering of Himself a Sacrifice to God, without blemish and without spot, that He might put away the iniquities of His people! Therefore judge yourselves in this matter and if you have ever denied Christ's Deity, or if you have ever assailed His atoning Sacrifice, it might truly have been said of *you*—"Then they spat in His face."

Further, this evil is also done *when men prefer their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ*. There are some who say, "We do not need pardon, we do not need to be justified by faith in Christ—we are already good enough." Or, "We are working out our own salvation—we mean to save ourselves." O Sirs, if you can save yourselves, why did Jesus bleed upon the Cross? It was a superfluity, indeed, that the Son of God should die in human form if there is a *possibility* of salvation by your own merits! And if you prefer your merits to His, it must be said of you, also, "Then they spat in His face." Your righteousnesses are only filthy rags! And if you prefer these to the fair white linen which is the righteousness of saints. If you think to wash yourselves in your tears and so despise that precious blood apart from which there is no purging of our sin—to *you* does our text apply—"then they spat in His face," when they preferred their own righteousness to Christ's.

I have often spoken to you about the parable of the prodigal son, but, possibly, your case is more like that of the elder brother in the parable. You have your portion of goods and it is all your own, and you are keeping it. You are rich, and increased in goods and have need of nothing. You are self-righteous. You think that you can do very well without God and without Christ—and you half suspect that God can hardly do without you. You are doing so very well in the observance of rites and ceremonies, and the performance of charity and devotions, that if *you* go into the far country, you will cut a very respectable figure! You will be one of those excellent citizens of that country who will, in due time, send some poor prodigal into your fields to feed your swine. I am inclined to believe that your case is even more sad and hopeless than that of the prodigal, himself! You, too, have gone far away from God. You are living without Him. He is not in all your thoughts. You could almost wish that there were no God, for then there would be no dark cloud hovering in the distance to spoil your summer's day, no fear of storms to come to mar the joy of the hour. Just as truly as of the avowed infidel who openly rejects Christ, it must be said of you, "Then they spat in His face."

The same thing is oh so sadly true *when anyone forsakes the profession of being a follower of Christ's*. There are some, alas, who, for a time, have appeared to stand well in the Church of God—I will not judge

them—but there have been some who, after making a profession of religion, have deliberately gone back to the world. After seeming for a while to be very zealous, they have become worldly and, perhaps, even lascivious and vile. They break the Sabbath, they neglect the Word of God, they forsake the Mercy Seat—and their last end is worse than their first. When a man forsakes Christ for a harlot, when he gives up Heaven for gold, when he resigns the joys he professed to have had in Christ in order that he may find mirth in the company of the ungodly, it is another instance of the truth of these words, "Then they spat in His face." To prefer any of these things to Christ is infamous—and the mere act of spitting from the mouth seems little compared with this sin of spitting with the very heart and soul—and pouring contempt upon Christ by choosing some sin in preference to Him. Yet, alas, how many are thus still spitting in Christ's face! Perhaps some now present are doing it.

If, dear Friends, our conscience in any measure accuses us of this sin, *let us at once confess it.* Let us humble ourselves before the Lord and with the very mouth that spat upon Him, let us kiss the Son lest He be angry and we perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little!

And when we have confessed the sin, *let us believe that He is able and willing to forgive us*. I know that it requires a great act of faith, when sin is consciously felt, to believe in the splendor of Divine Mercy. But, dear Friends, believe it! Do the Lord Jesus the great honor of saying to Him, "Gracious Lord, wash me in Your precious blood. Though I did spit in Your face, wash me in that cleansing Fountain and I shall be whiter than snow." And according to your faith, so shall it be done to you. You shall have the forgiveness, even, of this great sin if you confess it and believe that Christ is both able and willing to forgive it!

And when you have done that, then *let your whole life be spent in trying to magnify and glorify Him* whom you and others have defamed and dishonored! Oh, I think that if I had ever denied Christ's Deity, I would want to stand in this pulpit night and day to revoke what I had said—and to declare Him to be the Son of God with power! I think that if I had ever set up anything in opposition to Him, I should want, day and night, to be setting Him up above everything else, as, indeed, I long to do! Come, Christian Brothers and Sisters, let us do something unusual in Christ's honor! Let us find out something or invent something fresh, either in the company of others or all by ourselves, by which we may further glorify His blessed name!

Yet once more, if ever anybody should despise us for Christ's sake, let us not count it hard, but *let us be willing to bear scorn and contempt for Him*. Let us say to ourselves, "'Then they spat in His face.' What, then, if they also spit in mine? If they do, I will 'hail reproach and welcome shame,' since it comes upon me for His dear sake!" Look, that wretch is about to spit in Christ's face! Put *your* cheek forward, that you may catch that spittle upon *your* face, that it fall not upon Him, again, for as He was put to such terrible shame, everyone who has been redeemed with

His precious blood ought to count it an honor to be a partaker of the shame, if by any means we may screen Him from being further despised and rejected of men!

There, dear Friends, I have not preached, I have just talked very, very feebly and not at all as I wished and hoped I might be able to about this wonderful text—"Then they spat in His face."

Now try to follow me, just for a few minutes, while I let you see that same face in a very different light. Our second text is in the 20th Chapter of the Revelation, at the 11th verse—"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, *from whose face the earth and Heaven fled away*; and there was found no place for them."

This passage needs no words of mine to explain it. Notice how the Apostle begins—"*I saw*." Oh, I wish I had the power to make you see this great sight! Sometimes, to vividly realize a Truth even once is far better than to have merely heard it stated ten thousand times. I remember the story of a soldier who was employed in connection with one of the surveys of Palestine. He was with some others of the company in the valley of Jehoshaphat and, without thinking seriously of his words, he said to his comrades, "Some people say that when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world, the judgment will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, in this very place where we now are." Then he added, "When the Great White Throne shall be set, I wonder whereabouts I shall be." It is said that he carelessly exclaimed, "I shall sit here upon this big stone." And he sat down, but in an instant he was struck with horror and fainted because, in the act of sitting down, he had begun to realize somewhat of the grandeur and the terror of that tremendous scene!

I wish I knew how to do or say *anything* by which I could make you realize this scene that John saw in his vision. The Lord Jesus Christ went up to Heaven from the top of Olivet in His own proper body—and He shall so come in like manner as He was taken up into Heaven—but He shall come, not the lowly Man of Sorrows, but as Judge of All, seated upon a great white throne! And John says, "I saw it." As we sang, a few minutes ago—

"The Lord shall come! But not the same
As once in lowliness He came—
A silent lamb before His foes,
A weary Man, and full of woes.
The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm.
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind."

I wish, dear Friends, that even in your *dreams* you might see this sight, for, though I have no trust in dreams by themselves, yet any realization of this great Truth of God will be better than the mere hearing of it.

"I saw," said John, "a great white throne." He saw *a throne*, for Christ now reigns! He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords—and when He comes

again, He will come in the power of universal sovereignty as the appointed Judge of all mankind! He will come upon a throne!

That throne is said to be *white*. What other throne can be so described? The thrones of mere mortals are often stained with injustice, or bespattered with the blood of cruel wars. But Christ's Throne is white, for He does justice and righteousness and His name is Truth.

It will also be a *great* white throne—a throne so great that all the thrones of former kings and princes shall be as *nothing* in comparison with it. The thrones of Assyria, and Babylon, and Persia, and Greece, and Rome shall all seem only like tiny drops of dew to be exhaled in a moment! But this Great White Throne shall be the recognized seat of the King of Kings, the Sovereign over all sovereignties—"I saw a great white throne."

John not only saw the Great White Throne, but also, "HIM *that sat upon it*." What a wondrous sight that was! John saw Him, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." John saw Him whose Divine Majesty shall shine resplendent even through the nail-prints which He shall still wear when seated on the Great White Throne. What a sight it was to John, who had leaned His head upon Christ's breast, to behold that same Master, whom He had seen die upon the Cross, now sitting upon the throne of universal judgement! "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it."

Now notice what happened—"*from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away*." As soon as ever this Great White Throne appeared, Heaven and earth began to roll away like a wave receding from the shore! What must HE be, before whose face Heaven and earth shall retreat as in dismay?

Observe, first, *Christ's power*. He does not drive away the Heaven and the earth. He does not even speak to them. The sight of His face is all that is needed—and the old Heaven, and the old sin-stained earth shall begin to flee away—"the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." And all that by the mere showing of Christ's face! He does not have to lift His arm, He has not to seize a javelin and to hurl it at the condemned earth—*at the sight of His face, Heaven and earth shall flee away!*

Behold the terror of *Christ's majesty*. And what will you do in that day—you who spit in His face, you who despised Him? What will you do in that day? Suppose the Great Judgment Day had already come! Suppose that the Great White Throne was just over yonder and that when this service was over, you must appear with all the risen dead before your Judge. One would have to say, "I have refused Him! How shall I dare look in His face?" Another would cry, "He drew me, once. I felt the tugging of His love, the drawings of His Spirit, but I resisted and would not yield. How can I meet Him now? How can I look Him in the face?" Another will have to say, "I had to strive hard to escape from the grasp of His hand of mercy. I stifled conscience and I went back into the world."

You will all have to look into that face, and that face will look at all of you! One will have to say, "I gave up Christ for the world." "I gave Him up for the theater," another must say. "I gave Him up for the dancing saloon," another will say. "I gave Him up for the love of women," another will say. "I gave Him up that I might carry on my business as I could not carry it on if I was a true Christian—I gave up Christ for what I could get." You will have to say all this—and that very soon. As surely as you see me upon this platform, you *will* see the King upon the Great White Throne—that King who was once despised and rejected of men!

O Sirs, I would that you would think of all this! It is not one hundredth part so much my concern as it is yours! I am not afraid to see Christ's face, for He has looked on me in love and blotted out all my sin—and I love Him and *long to be with Him forever and ever*. But if you have never had that look of love. If you have never been reconciled to Him, I ask you, by the love you bear yourselves, to begin to think about this matter! Begin to prepare to meet this King of Men, this Lord of Love, who, as surely as He is the Lord of Love, will be the King of Wrath, for there is no anger like the anger of love! There is no indignation like "the wrath of the Lamb," of which we read a few minutes ago. Divine Love, when it has become righteous indignation, burns like coals of juniper and is quenchless as Hell! Therefore—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross
And find salvation there"

and before Heaven and earth begin to flee away from the face of Him who sits upon the Throne, and before you, yourselves, begin to cry to the rocks to cover you and the mountains to hide you from that face—seek His face with humble penitence and faith that you may be prepared to meet Him with joy in that last tremendous day!

If what I have been saying is all a dream, dismiss it and go your ways to your sins. But if these things are the very Truth of God—and verily they are—act as sane men should and think them over, and prepare to meet your Judge! God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

MATTHEW 26:57-68;. REVELATION 6:12-17; 19:11-16; 20:11-15; 21:1.

We shall read two or three short portions of God's Word in order to bring before you the wonderful contrast to which I am about to direct your thoughts.

Matthew 26:57. *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.* It was night, but these wicked men could sit up for this gruel deed, to judge the Lord of Glory, and to put the Innocent One to shame! They "led Him away to Caiaphas the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

58. *But Peter followed Him afar off to the High Priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.* I have heard Peter represented as if he did wrong to follow Christ "afar off." I think he was the bravest of all the Apostles, for scarcely one of them followed Christ at all, at that time. Afterwards, John came to his senses and went into the Judgment Hall. Peter kept at a distance from his Lord, but he *did* follow Him and he *did* go into the High Priest's palace. He "went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." Peter was right enough in following Christ—it was *afterward*, when the temptation came, that he fell so grievously.

59, 60. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none.* Because they did not agree, they would not hold together. This is the weakness of falsehood—that it contradicts itself. These men felt that they must have some show of truth-likeness, even in condemning Christ, and this they could not get, at first, even from their false witnesses!

60, 61. *Yes, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses and said, This Fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.* Brothers and Sisters, observe that this was a little twisting of Christ's words, but that slight wresting made them as different as possible from what Christ had really said. I suppose that if you want to know how this twisting or wresting is done, any one of our general elections will give you the most wonderful examples of how everything that any man may say can be twisted to mean the very reverse of what he said! If there is one thing in which English people are expert beyond all others, it is in the art of misquoting, misstating and misrepresenting. As our Lord was wronged in this fashion, nobody need be surprised if the same should happen to him. "This Fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days."

62. *And the High Priest arose, and said to Him, Answer You nothing? What is it which these witness against You?* What was the good of answering? What is ever the good of answering when the only evidence brought against one is palpable and willful misrepresentation? So the Savior was silent. And thus He not only proved His wisdom, but He also fulfilled that marvelous prophecy of Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

63. *But Jesus held His peace. And the High Priest answered and said to Him, I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.* Now came the answer! The good confession that our Lord witnessed before His cruel adversaries.

64. *Jesus said to Him, You have said: nevertheless I say to you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.* How that sentence must have come with

the vividness of a lightning flash before their faces! What a declaration of power from One who stood there, bound before His enemies, apparently helpless and about to die!

65-68. *Then the High Priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy. What do you think? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then they spat in His face, and buffeted Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy to us, You Christ, Who is he that struck You?* Our Lord had told these mockers that they should one day see Him coming in the clouds of Heaven. Let us read in the Book of the Revelation concerning that great event.

Revelation 6:12-16. *And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of Heaven fell to the earth, even as a fig tree casts its late figs, when it is shaken by a mighty wind. And the Heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!* Think of the contrast between this awful cry and the sentence we read just now—"Then they spat in His face." "Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne." Think, too, of the contrast of which we were reminded in our opening hymn—

"While sinners in despair shall call,
'Rocks hide us; mountains, on us fall!'
The saints, ascending from the tomb,
Shall joyfully sing, 'The Lord is come!'"

17. *For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?* Let us read further on in the same Book.

Revelation 19:11, 12. *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. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns—*

"Bright with all His crowns of glory,
See the royal Victor's brow."

Again, note the contrast—"Then they spat in His face." "And on His head were many crowns"—

12-16. *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. And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike 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. And this is He in whose face His enemies did spit!

Now turn to the next chapter.

Revelation 20:11 *And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.* Driven, like chaff before the wind, from the face of Him who sat upon the Throne!

12-15. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and Hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.*

Revelation 21:1. *And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—364, 275, 363.

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

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

THE GREAT CHANGE
NO. 2474

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 19, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1886.

"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found."
Hosea 14:8.

THIS passage is in very vivid contrast to what Ephraim had previously said, as it is recorded in the early part of Hosea's prophecy. If you turn to the second chapter, and the fifth verse, you will find this same Ephraim saying, "I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink." These lovers were the idol gods and Ephraim was determined to go after them, for she ascribed to them her various comforts, her bread and her water, her wool and her flax, her oil and her drink. So desperately set was this Ephraim upon going after her idols that God had much ado to drag her away from them, for that second chapter continues, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them."

So, you see, this people had been desperately set upon following after idols, yet, before the prophecy is ended, we find this same Ephraim saying, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" What a change the Grace of God works in the heart! It reverses the action of the entire machinery of our being. It puts, "No," for, "Yes," and, "Yes," for, "No." It is a radical change—that which we hated, we come to love—and that which we loved, we come to hate. Whereas we said, concerning this and that, "I will," and, "I shall," the Grace of God makes us change our note and we say, "I will not, by God's Grace. I will not act as I said I would, for what have I to do anymore with idols?"

At the beginning of this discourse, I would like to put to each one whom I am addressing this question, "Have you, my Friend, ever experienced this great and total change?" Remember, if you have not, it is imperatively necessary that you should if you desire to be numbered among the Lord's people. "You must be born again," and this being born again is not the evolving of some good thing out of you that is already there, but hidden away, but the putting into you of something which is *not there!* It is the quickening of you from your death in sin. It is a change in you as great as was worked upon the Person of our Lord Jesus

when, after lying dead in the grave, He was brought to life. Nothing short of this new birth, this resurrection, this thorough, total, radical change will make you fit to enter Heaven! You have no right to expect that you will ever stand within yon gates of pearl unless you have been created anew in Christ Jesus! He that sits on the Throne of God says, "Behold, I make all things new." And He must make *you* new, or else into the new Kingdom where there is a new Heaven and a new earth, you can never come! No, you cannot even *see* that Kingdom, for our Lord's words are as true, today, as when He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Let that searching thought remain with you and try yourselves by it.

But now I shall take you at once to the words of the text, that we may think of the change which was worked upon Israel, or Ephraim. We will consider, first, *the character of this change*—"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?" Then, secondly, let us note *the cause of this change.* And thirdly, *the effect of this change*.

I. First, then, we are to consider THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHANGE.

Ephraim had been drunk with her idolatry. The Israelites were never content with idols of one sort—they went to Moab, to Egypt, to Philistia, to Assyria, to the Hittites and to any other *ites*—to borrow idols. They introduced fresh idols from distant countries. They were never satisfied with the *number* of their images, yet now, when God has effectually worked upon their hearts, they say, one voice speaking for all, "What have I to do anymore with idols?"

Notice, that *this change was a very hearty and spontaneous one*. Ephraim did not say, "I should like to worship idols, yet I dare not." She did not say, "I should like to set up engraved images, but I must not." On the contrary, she, herself, said, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" I wish that some people whom I might mention understood what conversion means. They say to us, "So you do not attend the theater—what a denial it must be to you!" It is nothing of the kind, for we never have a wish or a desire to go there. What have we, the twice-born, to do with these vain things of the world?" Oh, but the drunk's cup—it must be a very great piece of self-denial to you to forego it!" On the contrary, it is loathsome to us! We have come to feel as if the most nauseous medicine that could be mixed would be sweeter to us than that cup! What have we to do anymore with idols?

So, each thing that is evil becomes to the real convert a disgusting and distasteful thing. He does not say, "Oh, how I should like it! How I long for it! What a hungering I have after it!" If he detects in himself the least hankering after evil of any kind, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But as far as the work of God's Spirit has been worked upon him, he has a thorough hearty severance and divorce from those things which he once loved. He has as great a horror of them as once he had a desire for them. Now he sings—

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me.

Once I admired its trifles, too,
But Grace has set me free.
Its pleasures now no longer pleases,
No more content affords.
Far from my heart are joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord!
As by the light of opening day
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is revealed."

I say again, the change is a very spontaneous and hearty one. Ephraim shall herself freely say, "What have I to do anymore with idols? I have done with those things and I am glad to have done with them. Oh, that I had done with them once and for all!" I asked a convert, this last week, a question which, perhaps, I have asked a dozen others, "My dear Brother, are you perfect?" "No, Sir," each one has said, "I am not." Then when I have enquired, "Would you not like to *be* perfect?" the answer in every case has been, "Yes, indeed I would. It would be Heaven on earth if I could but be perfectly holy. Oh, that I were clean rid of sin!" So we sing, with Cowper—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee."

Let the idols go! Smash them all up, break them in pieces like potters' vessels! If there is a lust, if there is a passion, if there is a joy, if there is a desire that is not according to the mind of God, away with it! We cannot endure the evil thing and want to get rid of it. Ephraim shall say, and shall say it cheerfully, spontaneously, heartily, "What have I to do anymore with idols?"

Observe, also, that *this change is the work of God's effectual Grace*. Notice the wording of the text—"Ephraim *shall* say." It is *God* who says, "Ephraim *shall* say." Perhaps you ask me, "Did you not say that Ephraim said this voluntarily, spontaneously, with all her heart and of her own free will?" Yes, that is so. But the Holy Spirit, without violating the freedom of man's will, is the Master of that will! There used to be great wars and fights among Christian people about free will and Free Grace. And when I read the reports of those controversies, I am struck with the great amount of the Truth of God that was spoken on *both* sides. When I hear a man stoutly affirm that if there is any good thing, it is all of the Grace of God, I know that it is so. But when another declares that man is a free agent and that if he acts virtuously at all, his free will must consent to it and that this condition is essential to the very making of virtue, is not that also true? Certainly it is! And why should we not believe both?

Ephraim cheerfully says, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" And yet, at the back of that is the great mysterious energy and work of the Holy Spirit bringing to pass the eternal purpose and decree of God so that they are fulfilled! For God to work His will with mere materialism, with dead blocks of wood or stone, with rivers or with tempests is but or-

dinary Omnipotence! But for God to leave men absolutely free and responsible agents and never to interfere with the freedom of their agency, and yet for Him to accomplish His eternal purposes concerning them to every jot and tittle, this is, if I may so say, Omnipotent Omnipotence! This is almighty power carried to a climax! It is just so with the Grace of God—we spontaneously quit our sin—but it is because almighty Grace is working within us to will and to do of God's own good pleasure! "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?" because God, in His effectual Grace, has weaned her from her idols!

Notice next, dear Friends, that *this change is always a very personal one.* Ephraim says, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" She does not say, "What have the nations to do with idols?" That would be a wise question, but, as a rule, national or general religion does not amount to much. We say with Mr. Bunyan, "Those are generals, Man, come to particulars." Believe all the Truth of God with the general company of those who hold it, but mind that you come to *particulars* and say, "What have *I* to do anymore with idols?" Do not ask, "What has my *mother* to do with idols? What has my *brother* to do with idols? What has my *neighbor* to do with idols?" but, "What have *I* to do with idols?" If all other men go into sin, I must not. I ask each believing one to whom I am speaking to feel, "God has done so much for me that I must turn away from sin. To me, willful wickedness would be a horrible thing. I must quit all iniquity. Whatever all the rest of the world may do, I must not go with the multitude to do evil—I must loathe it and leave it. 'As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.' 'Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?'" Abhor selfishness and egotism, but, at the same time, be very personal and individual about your own religion! You were born alone and you will die alone—and you have need to be born again individually and personally. And it must come to a personal transaction between yourself and God, so that you can, for yourself, say, as we did in our singing—

"'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."

"What have I to do anymore with idols?" The change here implied must be spontaneous and hearty. It must be the result of Divine Grace and it must be personal.

And then, dear Friends, it must also be *a truly repentant change*—"What have I to do anymore with idols?" There is, in that question, a confession that the speaker has had to do with idols! Let the time past suffice us to have worked the will of the flesh. Brother, if you are resolved to serve God, through His Grace, yet before you begin that service, remember how you have, in the past, served the devil! Quit not your old ways

without many a tear of regret and many a blush of deep humiliation, for whatever you may do in the *future*, you cannot undo the *past*. Your wasted time, your injured faculties, your angered God, your friends you influenced for evil by your example—you cannot blot out all these—therefore, at least stay a while and shed penitent tears over the graves of your dead sins and ask your God to help you to feel that you have had enough of your evil ways, sin and neglect. Say, "What have I to do anymore with idols? I have had far too much to do with them already. O Satan, O Self, O World, I have served you all too long and now, my God, with deep regret for all the past, I turn my face to You!"

This change must also be, dear Friends, *life-long*. Notice two words in our text, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" Where the Grace of God really converts a man, he is not converted merely for the next quarter of a year, with the possibility of afterwards falling from Grace. That is a *human* conversion which can always come to an end! But if God converts you, you can *never* be unconverted! As conversion is the work of the Spirit of God, it is clear that it must need the same power to *undo* it as first *did* it. He who has made you a Christian will keep you a Christian! And unless a stronger than He shall come in and undo His work, you shall never go back to your old idols!—

"Where God begins His gracious work,
That work He will complete,
For round the objects of His love,
All power and mercy meet.
Man may repent him of his work,
And fail in his intent;
God is above the power of change,
He never can repent.
Each object of His love is sure
To reach the heavenly goal,
For neither sin nor Satan can
Destroy the blood-washed soul."

Oh, how I love to preach this glorious doctrine of everlasting salvation! The salvation that only carries you a little bit of the way to Heaven, I never thought worthy of my acceptance. I would not have it as a gift and I never thought it worth preaching to you. I remember hearing one of the revival preachers say that there are some who go on the road to Heaven and just take a ticket to the next station. Then they get out and take a new ticket and rush back to the train! And so they keep on. "But," said the man, "when I started, I took a ticket all the way through." *That* is the way to travel to Heaven! When you start, get a ticket all the way through! Listen to these words of Christ, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me and I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Listen, also, to these words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria—"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." O my Brothers and Sisters, God does not play at saving men, first doing the work and then undoing it! If He saves you, you are saved! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." There is the Gospel which we are sent to preach to you so that, when once converted, truly converted, you will say, "What have I to do anymore with idols?"

Perhaps someone asks, "Yes, but do not some professors go back and yet you say that if men, after making a profession of religion, live in sin, they shall be saved?" Certainly we say nothing of the kind! We say, on the contrary, that if truly converted they will *not* live in sin, but if the work of Grace is worked in them, they will be kept from sin. Or if they shall, through sudden temptation, fall, they shall be speedily restored—weeping and sighing they shall be brought back to the good way. We never said that men could *live in sin* and yet go to Heaven! That were damnable talk, not fit for a Christian to utter! But he who is truly saved is saved once and for all and he can say, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" Throughout the rest of his life he will have done with them, he will have quit them. He will burn his bridges behind him, never to go back to the country which he has quit once and for all. This is a salvation worth having! Therefore, I pray you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be a partaker of it!

Yet once more, notice that *this is a very thorough change*—"What have I to do anymore with idols?" O you who have done with idols, remember that you are also done with the idol temples, you are done with the false priests, you are done with the so-called "sacred thread" and other idolatrous tokens! You are done with *everything* pertaining to idolatry! You who once were drunks have done forever with the public-house and the drunk's cup! You who once were lascivious, if the Grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with fornication, what have you to do with any kind of uncleanness? You who were, before, dishonest, if the Grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with the tricks of trade? What have you to do with fraudulent bankruptcies? What have you to do with cheating and lying? Let each true Believer cry, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" Be gone, sin and Satan, bag and baggage! What has a man, who is bought with the blood of Christ, to do anymore with idols? He quits them once and for all, by God's good Grace!

I find that the rest of my text would take up far too much time for me to expound it fully, so I shall have to content myself with the second division of the subject.

II. This was to be, you will remember, THE CAUSE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE.

The first cause of this change is *the Grace received*. In the previous part of the chapter, we find the Lord saying, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him." Then our text naturally follows, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?" We cannot get you to give up sin, however earnestly we may exhort you to forsake it, but if, by God's Grace, you receive Christ as

your Savior, then you will abandon sin as a natural consequence! What is the best way to keep chaff out of a bushel measure? Fill it full of wheat! And when the heart of a man is full of Christ, there will be no room for the world, the flesh or the devil! These evil things cannot find an entrance where Christ has full possession. When God is as the dew of our soul and we receive freely of His Grace, then we do not need telling, urging and driving, but we at once say, "What have I to do anymore with idols?"

Another cause of this great change lies in *our perception of the beauties of the Lord*. I do not quite know whether what I am going to say is the exact teaching of the text, but I think it is. It is very difficult, sometimes, in these prophecies, to know *who* is speaking. There are often dialogues and the dialogues are not always so clearly marked that we can tell who is the speaker. I have always thought, when I have read this chapter, that it was the Lord who said, "I have heard him, and observed him," but on thinking the passage over very carefully, I am not quite sure that it is so. Let me give you another version, which I met with in two verses by an unknown poet, and then see whether this is not the meaning of the passage—

"I have heard Him and observed Him,
Seen His beauty rich and rare,
Seen His majesty and glory,
And His Grace beyond compare.
What have I to do with idols,
When such visions fill my eyes?
How be occupied with shadows
When the Substance passes by?"

Does the text mean, then, "I will have nothing more to do with idols, for I have heard my God and I have observed Him? I have heard Christ speak and I have observed the excellence of His Character"? This much I know—whether that is the teaching of this passage, or not—nothing weans the heart from idols like a sight of Christ! O you worldly Christians, who are getting to be so fond of this world, I am sure that you have not seen your Master lately! If you had, the world would sink in your esteem. O you who are beginning to be fond of human wisdom, you cannot have heard Him speak of late, or else He would be made of God to you, wisdom—and everything else would be folly! O you who are seeking to live for self and for earthly gain, your heads have not been lately pillowed on the Savior's bosom! You have not recently looked into those dear eyes which are more radiant than the glories of the morning! You cannot have known the fragrance of those garments which smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, or you would never be enamored by this poor, foul, unsavory world!

"I have heard Him, and observed Him—what have I to do anymore with idols?" "I have heard Him say, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.' I have observed Him go up to the Cross and lay down His life for me—'what have I to do anymore with idols?'" When you, as the bride of Christ, love your first Husband as you should love Him, then your wan-

derings will be at an end. When all your heart goes after the Well-Beloved and He enraptures you with manifestations of His love and of His Grace, *then* will you say, "What have I to do with idols—I, so favored, so enriched with Divine blessings, who am on the road to Heaven, who am so soon to see the face of Him I love—what have I to do with idols?"

That seems to me to be a grand meaning perfectly consistent with earnest Christian experience, so I leave it with you. This great change, then, is worked in us by the Grace of God and by a sight of the true beauties of our Lord.

But now, taking the text as it is generally understood, you will get another meaning. One cause for this great change is *the sense of answered prayer*: Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" And God says of Ephraim, "I have heard him." I remember, even as a child, God hearing my prayer. I cannot tell you what it was about, it may have been concerning a mere trifle, but to me, as a child, it was as important as the greatest prayer that Solomon ever offered for himself! God heard my prayer and it was thus early established in my mind that the Lord was God. And afterwards, when I came really to know Him—for, like the child Samuel, I did not then *know* the Lord, I only felt after Him in prayer—afterwards, when I came to cry to Him intelligently, I had this prayer answered and that petition granted, and many a time since then. I am only speaking what any of you who know the Lord could also say—many a time since then He has answered my requests. I cannot tell you all about this matter. There is many a secret between me and my dear Lord. This very week I have had a love-token from Him which, if I could tell you about it, would make your eyes wonder and fill with tears! I asked and I received, as manifestly as if I had spoken to my brother in the flesh and he had said, "Yes, there, take all you need."

Well now, I always find that, in proportion as I am conscious that God is hearing my prayers, my heart says, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" If I can have from my God whatever I ask for, why need I cringe and bow my knee to men? If I have but to go to God and wait upon Him and He will give me the desire of my heart, what have I to do with fretting, fuming and being anxious? What have I to do with idols? If there is everything in Christ and that everything is to be had for the asking, what have I to do with idols? It is wonderful how you are weaned from the dry breasts of the world when you can drink in all that your soul desires from the living God! If God, the Jehovah of Hosts, is no more to you than the gods of the heathen, or the gods of the men of the world, why, then, you will have to do with idols! But if your God is the God that hears prayer and if you live in His Presence and speak to Him—and He speaks to you. If you keep up perpetual communion with Him so that God can say to you, "I have heard him and observed him"—then I am sure that you will also say—"What have I to do anymore with idols?"

If I am addressing any poor soul that has been craving mercy from God, one who has been crying for months to God to give him forgiveness through Jesus Christ, why, dear Heart, if you will only believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ, you shall get all that you are asking—you shall receive peace, pardon, joy and rest! And then you will say, "What have I to do anymore with idols?"

"Oh," says one, "my dear Sir, I have been trying to overcome sin and I cannot!" I know *you* cannot, but if you begin by receiving Christ, by praying to God and getting the answer, *then* you will be able to say, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" You want to first *wash yourself* and *then* come to the Fountain. That will not do! You must come, black as you are, and wash and be cleansed. You want to get rich spiritually and *then* come to God to enrich you. No! You must come to Him, poor! Come without anything of your own, just as you are, and trust the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus! He will give you all you need and then you will say, "What have I to do anymore with idols, for God has heard me, and He does observe my soul?"

You see, then, some of the ways in which this very great and wonderful change is worked. I have had to omit many other points on which I meant to speak, but I pray that this change may be worked in each of you. Do not wait to have the change worked and *then* come to God, but come to God *for* it! If you have a broken heart, come to Christ with it! But if you have not a broken heart, come to Christ to break your heart! If you feel your sin, come to Christ to have it forgiven, but if you do not feel your sin, come to Christ that you may be made to feel it! If there is any good thing in you, thank God for it, and come to Him for more. But if there is no good thing whatever in you, come without any good thing and let Christ begin at the very beginning with you, in all your emptiness, need, spiritual beggary and loathsomeness! Come to Him just as you are, for He still says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." May His sweet Spirit graciously attract each of you till you shall be drawn to Him and so drawn from your idols! And to Him shall be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34; HOSEA 14.

Psalm 34:1. *I will bless the LORD at all times.* "At dark times and bright times when I am alone, and when I am in company. When I feel like doing it and when I do not feel like doing it. 'I will bless the Lord at all times.'"

1. *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* "I will not only feel it in my heart, but I will give expression to it with my mouth. Those who do not care for this blessed employment may leave it alone, but as for me, 'His praise shall continually be in my mouth.'"

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.* "I will ride the high horse when I begin to talk of the goodness of God—'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord'—and whereas boasters are generally very vexatious to humble-minded people, this kind of boasting shall please them. 'The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.'"

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* Come, my Brothers and Sisters, I cannot perform this happy service alone! It is too much for me all by myself. This bunch of grapes is too heavy to be carried by one. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together."

4. *I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* Should not the prayer-hearing God be praised? If He hears the *cries* of His people, should He not also hear the *praises* of His people? It is not one, only, to whom God has thus listened, but many can say with the Psalmist, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me."

5, 6. *They looked to Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* It is God's delight to hear the cry of poor men! Sometimes He passes by the rich and great, and gives heed to the poor and desolate. It is our need that has the loudest cry with God—if our necessities are urgent, our prayer will be powerful.

7. *The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.* God's children are always attended like princes—legions of angels form their bodyguard. The Angel of the Lord and companies of holy angels with Him pitch their celestial tents round about them that fear God!

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* Try Him, dear Friends, and prove for yourselves how good and gracious He is—"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him."—

"Oh, make but trial of His love!
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in His truth confide!"

9. *O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.* He will supply all their wants. You need not fear for anything else when you once fear God.

10. *The young lions lack, and suffer hunger.* They are strong, fierce, crafty and unscrupulous, yet they still suffer hunger—

10. *But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.* Though they are neither cruel, nor cunning, nor strong, "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." What a promise for you to plead in prayer, dear Friends! If you are in any need, do not hesitate, but by an act of faith take this gracious Word of God and plead it with the promise-keeping God! "Have You not said that, 'they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing'? Then, Lord, do as You have said."

11-13. *Come, you children, hearken to me. I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile.* He who can manage his tongue can manage his whole body, for the tongue is the rudder of the ship. And if that is properly held, the vessel will be rightly steered. If you would escape the quicksands and the rocks,

look well to your tongue! Keep it from evil, that it speaks neither blasphemy against God nor slander against your fellow men. And keep your lips from guile, that is, from deceit, from double meanings, from saying one thing and meaning another, or making other people think that you mean another—an art all too well understood in these days. God make us plain-speaking men, who say what we mean, and mean what we say! When, by the Grace of God, we are taught to do this, we have learned a good lesson.

14. *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.* If it runs away from you, run after it. Never run into or after a quarrel, but always run after peace—"Seek peace, and pursue it."

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.* The Lord is always watching them and He is always listening that He may hear everything they say, especially when they cry to Him.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* He will not only destroy the wicked, but He will blot out the very memory of them! They may become great and famous in their wickedness, but they shall not be kept in memory, as the righteous are. As Solomon says, "The name of the wicked shall rot."

17, 18. *The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit.* Men do not care for broken hearts, but God does. "Give me a sound heart and a brave heart," says man. "Give me a broken and a contrite heart," says the Lord. If you have such a heart as that, be not afraid to draw near to your God, through Jesus Christ, for He is already near you!

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.* Many who read this verse admit that the first part of it is true—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Yes, but the latter clause is also true—"but the Lord delivers him out of them all." Do not omit either portion of the passage, for one part is as true as the other!

20. *He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken.* God's people shall suffer no real, lasting, vital injury. You may have flesh wounds, but as to the bones of your spirit, as it were, the *solid* part of it, "not one of them is broken."

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.* They shall want nothing else to make an end of them but their own sins—"Evil shall slay the wicked."

22. *The LORD redeems the soul of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.* Now we are going to read the last chapter of the Book of the Prophet Hosea, the first of the minor Prophets.

Hosea 14:1. *O Israel, return to the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.* When we fall by sin, we must regain our comfort by going back to the place where we lost it. "Return to the Lord your God for you have fallen by your iniquity." Then, to help us return, God, through His servant, actually makes a prayer for us.

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.* "What words am I to take?" asks the poor convicted sinner. "I cannot put words together." Here are the words put into your mouth—

2. *Say to Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Come with humble confession, come with sincere repentance, come with earnest supplication, come trusting to the Grace of God, come bringing your heart with you and rendering it to God as a living sacrifice!

3. *Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy.* If you come to God to be saved, you must bring no other savior with you! What an encouragement is given to us to come to God! He calls Himself the Father of the fatherless. O you whose soul is orphaned, you who are left disconsolate in a world of grief, come to Him in whom the fatherless find mercy, for so shall *you* find mercy!

4, 5. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew to Israel.* "Swiftly and mysteriously will I come and refresh him."

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* Quickly, beautifully—

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* He shall be as permanent as he is fair, like a cedar as well as like a lily.

6. *His branches shall spread.* The dew of the Lord imparts influence to men—it gives them, as it were, branches, with which they cast a wide shadow.

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* The beauty of fruitfulness. God grant all of us this beauty!

6. *And his smell as Lebanon.* Oh, to stand in holy repute among men, so that there is a fragrance going forth from us, like the sweet odors from the wild thyme and other products of Mount Lebanon!

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* When God blesses men, He also blesses those round about them. Your children, your servants, your neighbors shall all be the better if the Grace of God comes to you. So may it be!

8, 9. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—377, 657, 658.

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

"MY GARDEN"—"HIS GARDEN"
NO. 2475

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 26, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 20, 1882.

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

WHAT a difference there is between what the Believer was by nature and what the Grace of God has made him! Naturally, we were like the waste howling wilderness, like the desert which yields no healthy plant or verdure. It seemed as if we were given over to be like a salt land which is not inhabited—no good thing was in us, or could spring out of us. But now, as many of us as have known the Lord are transformed into gardens—our wilderness is made like Eden, our desert is changed into the garden of the Lord. "I will turn to you," said the Lord to the mountains of Israel when they were bleak and bare, "I will turn to you and you shall be tilled and sown." And this is exactly what He said to the barrenness of our nature. We have been enclosed by Grace, we have been tilled and sown, we have experienced all the operations of the Divine Farmer. Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "My Father is the Farmer," and He has made us to be fruitful to His praise, full of sweetness where once there was no fruit and nothing that could give Him delight.

We are a garden, then, and in a garden there are flowers and fruit. And in every Christian's heart you will find the same evidences of culture and care—not in all, alike, for even gardens and fields vary in productiveness. In the good ground mentioned by our Lord in the parable of the sower, the good seed did not all bring forth a hundredfold, or even sixty-fold. There were some parts of the field where the harvest was as low as thirty-fold and I fear that there are some of the Lord's gardens which yield even less than that. Still, there are the fruits and there are the flowers in measure. There is a good beginning made wherever the Grace of God has undertaken the culture of our nature.

I. Now coming to our text, and thinking of Christians as the Lord's garden, I want you to observe, first, that THERE ARE SWEET SPICES IN BELIEVERS.

The text assumes, when it says, "Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out," that there are, in the Lord's garden, sweet flowers that drip with honey, and all manner of delightful perfumes. There *are* such sweet spices within the Believer's heart—let us think of them for a few minutes and first, let me remind you of *the names of these sweet spices.*

For instance, there is *faith*. Is there anything out of Heaven sweeter than faith—the faith which trusts and clings, which believes and hopes, and declares that, though God shall slay it, yet will it trust in Him? In the Lord's esteem, faith is full of fragrance. He never delighted in the burning of bulls and the fat of fed beasts, but He always delighted in the faith which brought these things as types of the one great Sacrifice for sin. Faith is very dear to Him. Then comes *love* and, again, I must ask—Is there to be found anywhere a sweeter spice than this—the love which loves God because He first loved us, the love which flows out to all the brotherhood, the love which knows no circle within which it can be bounded, but which loves the whole race of mankind and seeks to do them good? It is exceedingly pleasing to God to see love growing where once all was hate—and to see faith springing up in that very soul which was formerly choked with the thorns and briers of doubt and unbelief! And there is also *hope* which is, indeed, an excellent Grace, a far-seeing Grace by which we behold Heaven and eternal bliss. There is such a fragrance about a God-given hope that this poor sin-stricken world seems to be cured by it. Wherever this living, lively hope comes, there men lift up their drooping heads and begin to rejoice in God their Savior. You do not need that I should go over all the list of Christian Graces and mention meekness, brotherly kindness, courage, uprightness, or the patience which endures so much from the hand of God— whatever Grace I might mention, it would not be difficult at once to convince you that there is a sweetness and a perfume about all Grace in the esteem of Him who created it—and it delights Him that it should flourish where once its opposite was found growing in the heart of man. These, then, are *some* of the saints' sweet spices.

Next, notice that *these sweet spices are delightful to God*. It is very wonderful that we should have within us anything in which God can take delight. Yet when we think of all the other wonders of His Grace, we need not marvel at all. The God who gave us faith may well be pleased with faith. The God who created love in such unlovely hearts as ours may well be delighted at His own creation. He will not despise the work of His own hands—rather will He be delighted with it and find sweet complacency therein. What an exaltation it is to us worms of the earth that there should ever be anything in us well-pleasing to God! Well did the Psalmist say, "What is man, that You are mindful of Him? And the son of man, that you visit Him?" But God *is* mindful of us and He *does* visit us! Of old, before Christ came into this world in human form, His delights were with the sons of men—much more is it so now that He has taken their nature into Heaven, itself, and given to those sons of men His own Spirit to dwell within them! Let it ravish your heart with intense delight that though often you can take no complacency in yourself, but go with your head bowed down like a bulrush and cry, "Woe is me!" yet in that very cry of yours, God hears a note that is sweet and musical to His ears!

Blessed is *repentance*, with her teardrops in her eyes, sparkling like diamonds. God even takes delight in our longings after holiness and in our loathing of our own imperfections. Just as the father delights to see his child anxious to be on the best and most loving terms with him, so does God delight in us when we are crying after that which we have not

yet reached—the perfection which shall make us to be fully like Himself! O Beloved, I do not know anything that fills my soul with such feelings of joy as does the reflection that I, even I, may yet be and do something that shall give delight to the heart of God, Himself! He has joy over one sinner that repents, though repentance is but an initial Grace—and when we go on from that to other Graces and take yet higher steps in the Divine life—we may be sure that His joy is in us and, therefore, our joy may well be full.

These spices of ours are not only delightful to God, but *they are healthy to man.* Every particle of faith that there is in the world is a sort of purifier. Wherever it goes, it has a tendency to kill that which is evil. In the spiritual sanitary arrangements which God made for this poor world, He put men of faith—and the faith of these men—into the midst of all this corruption to help to keep other men's souls alive, even as our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "You are the salt of the earth." The sweet perfumes that flow out from the flowers which God cultivates in the garden of His Church are scattering spiritual health and sanity all around! It is a blessed thing that the Lord has provided these sweet spices to overpower and counteract the unhealthy odors that float on every breeze! Think, then, dear Friends, of the importance of being God's fragrant flowers which may yield perfumes that are delightful to Him—and that are blessed and healthful to our fellow men! A man of faith and love in a Church sweetens all his brethren. Give us but a few such in our midst and there shall be no broken spiritual unity! There shall be no coldness and spiritual death, but all shall go well where these men of God are among us as a mighty influence for good. And, as to the ungodly around us, the continued existence in the earth of the Church of Christ is the hope of the world! The world that hates the Church knows not what it does, for it is hating its best friend! The spices with which God is conserving this present evil age, lest His anger should destroy it because of the growing corruption, are to be found in the flowers which He has planted in the garden of His Church!

It sometimes happens that *these sweet odors within God's people lie quiet and still.* There is a stillness in the air, something like that which the poet Coleridge makes "The Ancient Mariner" speak of in his graphic description of a calm within the tropics. Do you, dear Friends, ever get into that becalmed condition? I remember, when I was young, reading an expression—I think of Erskine's—in which he says that he likes a *roaring* devil better than a *sleeping* devil. It struck *me*, *then*, that if I could keep the devil always asleep, it would be the best thing that could possibly happen for me—but now I am not so sure that I was right! At all events, I know this—when the old dog of Hell barks very loudly, he keeps me awake! And when he howls at me, he drives me to the Mercy Seat for protection. But when he goes to sleep and lies very quiet, I am very apt to go to sleep, too—and then the Graces that are within my soul seem to be absolutely hidden! And, mark you, hidden Grace, which in no way reveals itself by its blessed odors, is all the same as if there were none to those that watch from the outside and, sometimes, to the Believer himself!

What is needed, in order that he may know that he has these sweet perfumes, is something outside himself. You cannot stir your own Graces! You cannot make them more! You cannot cause their fragrance to flow forth! True, by prayer you may help to this end, but then that very prayer *is put into you by the Holy Spirit*—and when it has been offered to the Lord, it comes back to you laden with blessings. But often something more is needed—some movement of God's Providence and much more—some mighty working of His Grace to come and shake the flower bells in His garden and make them shed their fragrance in the air. Alas, on a hot and drowsy day, when everything has fallen into a deep slumber, even God's saints, though they are wise virgins, go as soundly asleep as the foolish virgins and they forget that "the Bridegroom comes!" "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" and, sometimes, you and I catch ourselves nodding when we ought to be wide awake! We are going through a part of that enchanted ground which John Bunyan describes and we do not know what to do to keep ourselves awake.

At such times, a Christian is very apt to ask, *"Am I, indeed, planted in God's garden? Am I really a child of God?"* Now I will say what some of you may think a strong thing, but I do not believe that he *is* a child of God who never raised that question! Cowper truly wrote—

"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.
I have sung and I expect that I may have to sing again—
"'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 cannot bear to get into that condition and I cannot bear to keep in it when I am in it, but still, there must be anxious thought about this all-important matter. Because you happened to be excited on a certain occasion and thought you were converted and were sure of Heaven, you had better look well to the evidence on which you are relying. You may be mistaken, after all, and while I would not preach up little faith, I would preach down great presumption! No man can have a faith too strong and no assurance can be too full if it really comes from God, the Holy Spirit. But if it comes merely out of your fancying that it is so and, therefore, will not examine yourself, whether you *are* in the faith, I begin to make up my mind that it is not so because you are afraid to look into the matter! "I know that I am getting rich," says a merchant. "I never keep any books and I do not need any books, but I know that I am getting on well in my business." If, my dear Sir, I do not soon see your name in the *Gazette*, I shall be rather surprised!

Whenever a man is so very good that he does not need to enquire at all into his position before God, I suspect that he is afraid of introspection and self-examination—and that he dare not look into his own heart! This I know, as I watch the many people of God committed to my care, here—I see some run on for 10 years or more serving God with holy joy and having no doubt or fear. They are not generally remarkable for any great depth of experience, but when God means to make mighty men of them,

He digs about them and soon they come to me crying and craving a little comfort—telling me what doubts they have because they are not what they want to be! I am glad when this is the case, I rejoice because I know that they will be spiritually better off afterwards! They have reached a higher standard than they had previously attained. They have a better knowledge, now, of what they ought to be. It may be that, before, their ideal was a low one and they thought that they had reached it. But God has revealed to them greater heights which they have to climb—and they may as well gird up the loins of their mind to do so by Divine help!

As they get higher, they perhaps think, "Now we are at the top of the mountain," when they are really only on one of the lower spurs of it. Up they go, climbing again! "If once I can reach that point, I shall soon be at the summit," you think. Yes, and when you have, at last, got there, you see the mountain still towering far above you! How deceptive is the height of the Alps to those who have not seen them before! I said to a friend, once, "It will take you about 13 hours to get to the top of that mountain." "Why," he replied, "I can run up in half-an-hour." I let him have a try and he had not gone far before he had to sit down to pant and rest. So you think of a certain height of Grace, "Oh, I can easily reach that!" Yes, just so, but you do not know how high it is. And those who think that they have reached the top do not know anything about the top, for he who knows how high is the holiness to which the Believer can attain will go on clambering and climbing, often on his hands and knees, and when he has reached that point which he *thought* was the summit, he will sit down and say, "I thought I had reached the top, but now I find that I have but begun the ascent." Or he may say with Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear," (and then I did not know much of You, or of myself, either), "but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

You see, then, that there are sweet spices lying in Christians, like hidden honey and locked-up perfume within the flowers on a hot day!

II. What is needed is that THOSE SWEET ODORS SHOULD BE DIFFUSED. That is to be our second head. Read the text again—"Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Observe, first, that *until our Graces are diffused, it is the same as if they were not there*. You may go through a forest and it may be abounding in game, yet you may scarcely see a hare or notice a pheasant anywhere. There they lie, all quiet and undisturbed, but, by-and-by, the beaters go through the woods making a great noise and away the pheasants fly! And you may see the timid hares run like hinds let loose because they are disturbed and awakened. That is what we sometimes need, to be awakened and stirred from slumber! We may not know that we have any faith till there comes a trial—and then our faith starts boldly up! We can hardly know how much we love our Lord till there comes a test of our love—and then we so behave ourselves that we know that we *do* love Him. Oftentimes, as I have already reminded you, something is needed from without to stir the life that lies hidden within. It is so with these sweet flowers in the spouse's garden—they need either the north

wind or the south wind to blow upon them that they may shed abroad their sweet odors.

Notice next, that *it is very painful to a Christian to be in such a condition that his Graces are not stirring.* He cannot endure it! We who love the Lord were not born again to waste our time in sinful slumber! Our watchword is, "Let us not sleep, as do others." We were not born to inaction—every power that God has put within us was meant to be used in working, striving and serving the Lord! So, when our Graces are slumbering, we are in an unhappy state. Then we long for any agency that would set those Graces moving. The north wind? Oh, but if *it* shall blow, then we shall have snow! Well, then, let the snow come, for we must have our Graces set in motion—we cannot bear that they should continue to lie quiet and still. "Awake, O north wind!"—a heavy trial, a bleak adversity, a fierce temptation—*anything* so long as we do but begin to diffuse our Graces! Or if the north wind is dreaded, we say, "Come, you south!" Let prosperity be granted to us! Let sweet fellowship with our Brothers and Sisters awaken us and holy meditations, full of delight, stir our souls! Let a sense of the Divine life, like a soft south wind, come to our spirit. We are not particular which it is, let the Lord send which He pleases, or both together, as the text seems to imply, only let us be awakened! "Quicken You me, O Lord, according to Your Word"—whichever Word you shall choose to apply—only quicken Your servant and let not the Graces within me be as if they were dead!

Remember, however, that *the best Quickener is always the Holy Spirit* and that blessed Spirit can come as the north wind, convincing us of sin and tearing away every rag of our self-confidence, or He may come as the soft south wind, all full of love, revealing Christ and the Covenant of Grace and all the blessings treasured for us therein. Come, Holy Spirit! Come as the Heavenly Dove, or as the rushing mighty wind, but come! Drop from above, as gently as the dew, or come like rattling hail, but come, blest Spirit of God! We feel that we must be moved, we must be stirred, our heart's emotions must once again throb to prove that the life of God is really within us! And if we do not realize this quickening and stirring, we are utterly unhappy.

You see also, dear Friends, from this text, that *when a child of God sees that his Graces are not diffused abroad, then is the time that He should take to prayer.* Let no one of us ever think of saying, "I do not feel as if I could pray and, therefore, I will not pray." On the contrary, *then* is the time when you ought to pray more earnestly than ever! When the heart is disinclined for prayer, take that as a danger signal and, at once, go to the Lord with this resolve—

"I will approach You—I will force
My way through obstacles to Thee!
To You for strength will have recourse,
To You for consolation flee!"

When you seem to yourself to have little faith, and little love, and little joy, then cry to the Lord all the more! "Cry aloud and spare not." Say, "O my Father, I cannot endure this miserable existence! You have made me to be a flower, to shed abroad my perfume, yet I am not doing it. Oh, by some means stir my flagging spirit till I shall be full of earnest industry,

full of holy anxiety to promote Your Glory, O my Lord and Master!" While you are thus crying, you must still believe, however, that God the Holy Spirit can stir your spirit and make you full of life again. Never permit a doubt about *that fact* to linger in your bosom, else you will be unnecessarily sad! You, who are the true children of God, can never come into a condition out of which the Holy Spirit cannot lift you up!

You remember the notable case of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot and, therefore, so nauseous to the great Lord that He threatened to spue her out of His mouth? Yet what is the message to the angel of that Church? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." This is not said to *sinners*, it is addressed to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans! "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Oh, matchless Grace! He is sick of these lukewarm professors, yet He promises to sup with them and that they shall sup with Him! That is the only cure for lukewarmness and decline—to renew heart-fellowship with Christ—and He stands and offers it to all His people right now! "Only open the door, and I will sup with you, and you shall sup with Me."

O you whose Graces are lying so sinfully dormant, who have to mourn and cry because of "the body of this death"—for death in you seems to have taken to itself a body and to have become a substantial thing, no mere skeleton, but a heavy, cumbrous form that bows you down—cry to Him who is able to deliver you from this lukewarm and sinful state! Let everyone of us put up the prayer of our text, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

III. Our third and closing head will help to explain the remaining portion of our text—"Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." These words speak of THE COMPANY OF CHRIST AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR FRUIT BY CHRIST.

I want you, dear Friends, to especially notice one expression which is used here. While the spouse was, as it were, shut up and frozen, and the spices of the Lord's garden were not flowing out, she cried to the winds, "Blow upon *my* garden." She hardly dared to call it her Lord's garden! But now notice the alteration in the phraseology—"Let my Beloved come into *His* garden and eat His pleasant fruits." The wind has blown through the garden and made the sweet odors to flow forth—now it is no longer, "my garden," but, "His garden." It is wonderful how an increase of Grace transfers our properties! While we have but little Grace, we cry, "*my*," but when we get great Grace, we cry, "*His*." Wherein you are sinful and infirm, Brothers and Sisters, that is yours—you rightly call it "*my*"—but when you become strong and joyous, and full of faith, that is *not* yours! And you rightly call it, "*His*." Let Him have all the glory of the change while you take all the shame and confusion of face to yourself that ever you should have been so destitute of Grace! So the spouse says, "Let my Beloved come into His garden. Here are all the sweet perfumes flowing out. He will enjoy them—let Him come and feel Himself at home among them. He planted every flower and gave to each its fragrance—let Him come into His garden and see what wonders His Grace has worked."

Do you not feel, Beloved, that *the one thing you need to stir your whole soul is that Christ should come into it?* Have you lost His company lately? Oh, do not try to do without it! The true child of God ought not to be willing to bear broken communion for even five minutes, but should be sighing and crying for its renewal! Our business is to seek to "walk in the light as God is in the light," fully enjoying communion with Christ our Lord. But when that fellowship is broken, then the heart feels that it has cast all its happiness away and it must robe itself in sackcloth and sorrowfully fast. If the Presence of the Bridegroom shall be taken away from you, then, indeed, shall you have cause to fast and to be sad. The best condition a heart can be in, if it has lost fellowship with Christ, is to resolve that it will give God no rest till it gets back to communion with Him—and to give *itself* no rest till once more it finds the Well-Beloved!

Next, observe that when the Beloved comes into His garden, the heart's humble but earnest entreaty is, *"Let Him eat His pleasant fruits."* Would you keep back anything from Christ? I know you could not if He were to come into His garden! The best things that you have, you would first present to Him, and then everything that you have, you would bring to Him and leave all at His dear feet. We do not ask Him to come to the garden that we may lay up our fruits, that we may put them by and store them up for *ourselves*—we ask Him to come and eat them. The greatest joy of a Christian is to give joy to Christ! I do not know whether Heaven, itself, can exceed this pearl of giving joy to the heart of Jesus Christ on earth! It can match it, but not exceed it, for it is a superlative joy to give joy to Him—the Man of Sorrows, who was emptied of joy for our sakes and who now is filled up, again, with joy as each one of us shall come and bring his share and cause to the heart of Christ a new and fresh delight!

Did you ever reclaim a poor girl from the streets? Did you ever rescue a poor thief who had been in prison? Then I know that as you have heard of the holy chastity of the one, or of the sacred honesty of the other of those lives that you have been the means of restoring, you have said, "Oh, this is delightful! There is no joy equal to it! The effort cost me money, it cost me time, it cost me thought, it cost me prayer, but I am repaid a thousand times!" Then, as you see them growing up so bright, so transparent, so holy, so useful, you say, "This work is worth living for, it is a delight beyond measure!" Often persons come to me and tell me of souls that were saved through my ministry 20 years ago. I heard, the other day, of one who was brought to Christ by a sermon of mine nearly 30 years ago and I said to the friend who told me, "Thank you, thank you! You could not tell me anything that would give my heart such joy as this good news that God has made me the instrument of a soul's conversion." But what must be the joy of Christ who does all the work of salvation—who redeems us from sin, and death, and Hell—when He sees such creatures as we are made to be like Himself and knows the Divine possibilities of glory and immortality that lie within us?

What are we going to be, Brothers and Sisters, we who are in Christ? We have not any idea of what holiness, glory and bliss shall yet be ours! "It does not yet appear what we shall be." We may rise even while on earth to great heights of holiness—and the higher the better—but there is

something better for us than mortal eyes have ever seen or mortal ears have ever heard! There is more Grace to be in the saints than we have ever seen in them, the saintliest saint on earth was never such a saint as they are, yonder, who are before the Throne of the Most High! And I know not but that, even when they get there, there shall be a something yet beyond for them and that through the eternal ages they shall still take for their motto, "Onward and upward!"

In Heaven, there will be no, "Finis." We shall still continue to develop and to become something more than we have ever been before—not fuller, but yet capable of holding more—always growing in the possibility of reflecting Christ and being filled with His love! And all the while our Lord Jesus Christ will be charmed and delighted with us. As He hears our lofty songs of praise. As He sees the bliss which will always be flashing from each one of us. As He perceives the Divine ecstasy which shall be ours, forever, He will take supreme delight in it all! "My redeemed," He will say, "the sheep of My pasture, the purchase of My blood, borne on My shoulders, My very heart pierced for them, oh, how I delight to see them in the heavenly fold! These, My redeemed people, are joint heirs with Me in the boundless heritage that shall be theirs forever! Oh, how I delight in them!"

"Therefore, comfort one another with these words," Beloved, and cry mightily that, on this Church, and on all the Churches, God's Spirit may blow to make the spices flow! Pray, dear Friends, all of you, for the Churches to which you belong. And if you, my Brother, are a pastor, be asking especially for this Divine wind to blow through the garden which you have to cultivate, as I also pray for this portion of the garden of the Lord—"Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." The Lord be with each one of you, Beloved, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—811, 814, 778.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 20:11-29.

Verses 11-12. *But Mary stood outside at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher, and saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.* You see, dear Friends, love is very patient and persevering. The other disciples had gone home, but not Mary, she stands outside the sepulcher and still waits, for she cannot go till she has seen her Lord. Love, however, has many sorrows for, as Mary stood outside the sepulcher, she was weeping. Oftentimes your love to Christ will make you sorrowful when you, for a while, lose His Presence. It will be a great sorrow to you if your Lord should seem to have hidden Himself from you. But see how quick-sighted love is—Mary saw the angels, whom the other disciples might have seen if they had not gone home. One of the beatitudes is, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." And love is one of the most eminent signs of purity. I do not wonder, therefore, that love saw angels, since love sees God Himself!

13. *And they said to her, Woman, why do you weep?* They could not understand Mary's tears. Their question seemed to say, "Christ the Lord is risen from the dead and all the streets of Heaven are ringing with hallelujahs because the great Conqueror has returned bearing the spoils of His victory. Why do you *weep*? Are you not one of those for whom this redeeming work was done? 'Woman, why do you weep?'"

13. *She said to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.* That was enough to make any of Christ's loved ones weep and if ever you hear a sermon which has not Christ in it, you may well go down the aisle weeping. And if any ask why you weep, you may reply, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

14. *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.* A strange and sad unbelief had taken possession of her and there is nothing that blinds the eyes so quickly as unbelief. Christ is near you, poor Soul, near you in your trouble, but you do not know that it is Jesus! Open your eyes! May God the Holy Spirit touch them with His heavenly eye salve, that you may see that it is Christ, Himself, who is close beside you!

15. *Jesus said to her, Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, Sir, if you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.* Her supposition was wrong in one way, but right in another, for Jesus *is* the Gardener, and His Church is His garden! There was one gardener in whom we fell—here is another and a better Gardener in whom we rise! It is He, and He alone, who can properly tend all the plants of His Father's right-hand planting. He is the Gardener, though not the one that Mary supposed! But what a strange request this was for her to make—"If you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Could *she* have carried away the body of Jesus if it had been there? If so, what a ghastly load for her tender frame to bear! Yes, but she would have done it, somehow or other, for, if faith laughs at impossibilities and cries, "It shall be done!" it is love that actually does the deed of holy daring. The task that seems well-near impossible is readily performed when the spirit is invigorated by love.

16. *Jesus said to her, Mary.* In the simple utterance of her name, there were tones which she could not mistake. It was the sweetest music she had heard since her Lord's last message from the Cross! "Mary." "Why, surely," she must have thought, "it is the Master's voice calling me by name!"

16. *She turned herself and said to Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.* Or, "My Master!" The word, "Rabboni" means something more than, "Master." Mary seems to say, "Greatest and best of all Teachers, I know Your voice! Now that You have called me by my name, I recognize You, and I wait to listen to the instruction You are ready to impart to me."

17. *Jesus said to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father.* "There will be time enough for the fellowship your heart craves"—

17. *But go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God.* Practical service is better than personal rapture! Mary would gladly have held her Lord, but He said to

her, "Go to My brethren." You will always find that it is best and safest to do *what* Jesus tells you, *when* He tells you and *as* He tells you. What a delightful message is this from the risen Christ! "Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God."

18, 19. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace be to you.* If they had possessed more faith, they would have left a door open for Jesus to come in, however anxious they might have been to shut out the Jews! I am afraid, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we, also, are sometimes more anxious about shutting out the Jews than we are about letting in Christ! I mean, we are very particular in trying to keep out our own troubles and cares, but if we get Jesus within, we shall not think of the Jews, nor of our troubles and cares—they will all disappear as soon as He appears.

20. *And when He had so said, He showed to them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* That was enough to make them glad. The most glad sight out of Heaven and the most glad sight *in* Heaven, itself, is to see the Lord!

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be to you: as My Father has sent Me, even so send I you.* "I am the Messiah, the Sent One; you, too, shall be My missionaries, My sent ones." It is but another form of the same word.

22, 23. *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive you the Holy Spirit: whoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them; and whoever sins you retain, they are retained.* That is to say, "As you proclaim My Gospel, I will back up your message. When you preach of pardoning blood, I will make it efficacious. When you declare to penitent sinners that their sins are remitted, it shall be so. And when you tell those who believe not that they are condemned already, and that unless they repent they shall abide in condemnation, their sins shall still be retained." The true minister of God speaks not apart from the Word of God—and when He speaks the Word of God, the God of the Word is, Himself, there to make it effectual. It shall be no wasted thunderbolt! It shall fall in reality and what the servant of Christ declares according to the Scriptures shall be proven to be true.

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.* Possibly he did not go out in the evening—it may be that he was a half-dead sort of Christian, like a great many people are in London. They think they have done finely if they go out on Sunday morning, but the *evening*—well, it is too cold for them, or they must find some other excuse for staying indoors! "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." That was a great pity because Thomas would not only be a loser by his absence, but he would be sure to influence others, for he was an Apostle. Surely, whenever it is possible, we who are leaders in the Church—ministers, deacons and elders—should take care that we are not absent from the House of the Lord.

25. *The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.* There is something good about that declaration of Thomas, for a man is not bound to believe merely on the testimony of others. He should, if he can, endeavor to get evidence for himself. And as Christ is still alive, the very best thing is to go to Him! But there was also much that Thomas said which was very wrong—he had no right to demand that he should see the nail prints in Christ's hands and, worse still, that he should be permitted to put his finger into them, and to thrust his hand into his Lord's side. There was more than a little impertinence about that utterance—and something more, even, than an ordinary unbelief! And when we ask for signs and wonders from God and say that we will not believe except we have them, we are guilty of very presumptuous conduct. We are bound to look for evidence concerning Christ, but when the evidence is sufficient, we ought not, out of curiosity, crave for more.

26. *And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them.* That was an improvement upon the meeting of the previous Lord's-Day evening. Thomas had learned, by this time, what he had lost the week before, so he was present on this occasion.

26, 27. *Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you. Then said He to Thomas.* Picking out the one who most needed to be addressed, like the Good Shepherd seeking out the sick sheep first. "Then said He to Thomas"—

27, 28. *Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God.* It has been well observed that Thomas was the first person who ever proved to himself the Deity of Christ from the exhibition of His wounds. There is a good argument in it, which we cannot stay to explain at this time, but the very humanity of Christ has in it the doctrine of His Deity. You can easily argue from the one to the other. How Divine must He be who, in His condescension, took upon Himself our nature!

29. *Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* That blessedness can be reached by all of us who believe in Christ! Those who lived in this world *before* Christ came, saw His day by faith, and they were blessed. Those who lived in His day, saw Him in the flesh and trusted Him, were blessed. But we who cannot see Him, yet believe in Him, are the most blessed of them all!

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

"THIS THING IS FROM ME"
NO. 2476

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 2, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 22, 1886.

"Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me."
1 Kings 12:24.

IT is very delightful to read a history in which God is made prominent. How sadly deficient we are of such histories of our own English nation! Yet surely there is no story that is more full of God than the record of the doings of our British race. Cowper, in one of his poems, shows the parallel between us and the house of Israel. He dwells upon various special incidents in our history and draws valuable lessons from them. God's wisdom and power have been conspicuous from the time when this now, full-grown nation, was but like a nursing child. He has nursed and watched over it, protecting it against gigantic foes and made it to be the defender of His Truth, the favored abode of His people. Oh, for a historian who could dip his pen in thoughts of God and who, from beginning to end of his history, would not be showing us the crafty policy of kings and cabinets, but the finger of God! We need, nowadays, to have history written in some such style as appears in these Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles—then might history become almost like a new Bible to us! We would find that, as the Book of Revelation agrees with the Book of Creation, so does the book of Divine Providence in human history agree with both of them, for the same God is the Author of all these works! If we cannot get anybody to write such histories, yet let us continually amend the errors and add appendices to such records as we have, for God is God, and God is *everywhere*, and blessed is the man who learns to spy Him out!

Notice, next, what I pointed out to you in our reading, what power was possessed by God's Prophets under the Old Testament. Here is one Shemaiah—some of you never heard of him before—perhaps you will never hear of him again. He appears once in this history and then he vanishes! He comes and he goes—only fancy this one man constraining an hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, warriors ready to fight against the house of Israel, to peace—by giving them in very plain, unpolished words, the simple command of God—"Thus says the Lord, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house." And it is added, "they hearkened, therefore, to the Word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the Word of the Lord." Why have we not such power? Perhaps, Brothers, we do not always speak in the name of the Lord, or speak God's Word as God's Word!

If we are simply tellers of our own thoughts, why should men mind *us*? If we speak the word which we, ourselves, have fashioned, what is there in our anvil that it should command respect for what we make upon it?

But if we can rise to the height of this great argument and speak the Truth of God as messengers of God, and there leave it, believing in it, ourselves, and expecting great results from it, I know that there will come more from our ministries than we have ever seen as yet! When the Apostle Peter spoke to the lame man at the Temple gate, he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." And he *did* rise up and walk because the name of Jesus Christ was relied upon! We have need to preach the Gospel, not as though our persuasion, much less our oratory, were to prevail with men, but believing that there is an intrinsic power in the Gospel and that God the Holy Spirit will go with it to work the Divine purpose and accomplish the decrees of the Most High! We have need to stand near to God and to be more completely overshadowed by His Presence—and to be, ourselves, more fully believers in the Divine Majesty—and then shall we see greater things than these! Surely, God must have meant that, under the New Testament, there should be a power in His Word even greater than that which rested on it under the Old Testament!

Note one more lesson conveyed by this incident. It would be a grand thing to preach only one sermon and to be as successful as Shemaiah was! It would be far better than to preach ten thousand and to accomplish nothing by them all. I hope the net result of our ministry will not be like that of the famous leader who, with his troops, marched up a hill and then marched down again. A man may take many years to say nothing and he may very elaborately and very eloquently discharge himself of that which it was totally unnecessary for him to have said, but it would be far better to be surcharged with one message—and to deliver that one in the power of Almighty God, even if the speaker's voice is never heard again! I pray that those of us who do preach the Gospel may preach each sermon as if that one discourse were worth a lifetime—worth the putting forth of every faculty that we possess, so that, if we never preached again, we might nevertheless have done a life-work in a single sermon!

What an opportunity is mine tonight! What an opportunity you, also, will have, my Brothers, when you confront your congregation next Lord's-Day—an opportunity which angels might envy you! Though you do not gather together a hundred and eighty thousand men, yet you may reach as many as that through the one sermon you are going to preach next Sunday, for one person converted by the Holy Spirit, through you, may be the means of bringing in many others and, eventually, there may come out of your one effort a harvest that cannot be counted! A forest once slept within a single acorn! The beginning of the great lies in the little! Let us therefore earnestly pray God that we may preach as dying men to dying men and deliver each discourse as if that one message was quite enough to serve for our whole life-work. We need not wish to preach another sermon provided we are enabled to so deliver that one that the purpose of God shall be accomplished by us and the power of his Word shall be seen upon our hearers.

With these remarks by way of preliminary observations, I want to prove to you from our text that, first, *some events are very especially from*

God. Secondly, *when they are seen to be from God, they are not to be fought against. A*nd, thirdly, *this general principle has many special applications,* some of which we shall try to make.

I. First, SOME EVENTS ARE ESPECIALLY FROM GOD—"This thing is from Me."

I do not know what some people believe, for they seem to try to do without God altogether, but I believe that God is in *all* things—that there is neither power, nor life, nor motion, nor thought, nor existence apart from Him. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." By Him all things exist and consist. Like foam upon the wave, all things would dissolve away did not God continue them, did not God uphold them. I see God in *everything*—from the creeping of an aphid upon a rosebud to the fall of a dynasty! I believe that God is in the earthquake and the whirlwind, but I believe Him to be equally in the gentlest zephyr and in the fall of the sere leaf from the oak of the forest. Blessed is that man to whom there exists *nothing* in which he cannot see the Presence of God! It makes this world a grand sphere when God is seen everywhere in it from the deepest mine to the remotest star. This earth is a wretched dark dungeon if once the light of the Presence and the working of God is taken away from it.

Notice also, dear Friends, that God is in events which are produced by the sin and the stupidity of men. This breaking up of the kingdom of Solomon into two parts was the result of Solomon's sin and Rehoboam's folly, yet God was in it—"This thing is from Me, says the Lord." God had nothing to do with the sin or the folly—but in some way which we can never explain—in a mysterious way in which we are to believe without hesitation, God was in it all! The most notable instance of this Truth of God is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ—that was the greatest of human crimes, yet it was foreordained and predetermined by the Most High—to whom there can be no such thing as crime, nor any sort of compact with sin. We know not how it is, but it is an undoubted fact that a thing may be from God and yet it may be worked, as we see in this case, by the folly and the wickedness of men.

Neither does this, in the least degree, interfere with human agency in its utmost freedom. Some who have held that man is a free agent have attempted to vindicate free agency as if predestination were the contradiction of it, which it is not! We who believe in predestination also believe in free agency as much as they do who reject the other truth. Others hold predestination and straightway they begin to rail at all who believe in the responsibility and free agency of men. My Brothers, there is nothing to rail at in either doctrine, the two things are equally true. "How, then," asks someone, "do you reconcile them?" These two Truths of God have never fallen out, as far as I know, and it is poor work to try to reconcile those who are true friends. "But," says the objector, "how do you make them seem to be true friends?" I do not make them seem to be true friends! I bless God that there are some things in the Bible which I never expect to understand while I live here. A religion which I could perfectly understand would be no religion to me—when I had mastered it, it would never master me! But to my mind it is a most delightful thing for the Believer to bow before inscrutable mysteries and to say, "My God, I never

thought that I was infinite. I never dreamt that I could take Your place and understand all things. I believe, and I am content."

So I believe in the free agency of men, in their responsibility and wickedness, and that everything evil comes of them. But I also believe in God, that, "this thing" which, on the one side of it, was purely and alone from men, on another side of it was still from God who rules both evil and good, and not only walks the garden of Eden in the cool of a summer's eve, but walks the billows of the tempestuous sea and rules everywhere by His sovereign might!

How, then, was "this thing" from God? Well, clearly, it was from God in two ways. First, it was so *as a matter of prophecy*. The Prophet Ahijah had prophesied that the ten parts of the torn garment which were given to Jeroboam should be symbolic of the ten tribes that would be given to him when they had been torn away from the house of David. The prophecy was literally fulfilled, as God's Words always are.

And, secondly, "this thing" was from God *as a matter of punishment*. He sent it as a punishment for the sins of the house of David of which Solomon had been guilty when he set up other gods before the Most High and divided the allegiance of his kingdom from Jehovah by bringing in the gods of Moab, Ammon and Egypt. God ordained this evil that He might chastise the greater evil of lack of loyalty to Himself on the part of His servant Solomon. Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, God sets evil against evil that He may destroy evil—and He uses that which comes of human folly that He may manifest His own wisdom!

So there are some events which are especially from the Lord, although it seems not so and this is, to us, often a great source of consolation. We have said to ourselves, "However did things get into this tangle and snarl?" Look at the professing Church at this present moment—what is there about it that can at all cheer the child of God? All things appear dark and complicated. They seem to be built on quicksand and that which is superficial, unsubstantial, dreamy and deceptive is everywhere! Still, the Lord lives and the Rock of our salvation fails not. As He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, so does He, also, with the folly and the wickedness of man—and the remainder of both He restrains! "The Lord sits upon the floods; yes, the Lord sits King forever." Hallelujah!

II. The second thing evidently taught by our text is that WHEN EVENTS ARE SEEN TO BE FROM THE LORD, THEY ARE NOT TO BE FOUGHT AGAINST.

Rehoboam had summoned his soldiers to go to war against the house of Israel, but, inasmuch as it was from God that the 10 tribes had revolted from him, he must not march into the territories of Israel, nor even shoot an arrow against them.

The thing that is happening to you is of the Lord, therefore resist it not, for *it would be wicked to do so*. If it is the Lord's will, so may it be. To put our will against His will is sheer rebellion against Him! Trace an event as distinctly from God and then the proper course of action is that which the Psalmist took, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because You did it." Absolute submission is not enough—we must go on to *joyful acquiescence* in the will of God. If the cup is bitter, our acquiescence must take it as cheerfully as if it were sweet. "Hard lines," you say. "To

hard hearts," I say! But when our hearts are right with God, so well do we love Him that if it ever came to a conflict *anywhere*, whether it should be our will or His will that should prevail, we should at once end the conflict by saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." It is nothing but wickedness, whatever form it assumes, when we attempt to resist the will of God.

But, next, while it is wicked, *it is also vain*, for what can we do against the will of God? Shall the rush by the river resist the north wind? Shall the dust rise up in conflict with the tempest? God is Almighty—if that were all, it were enough, for who can stand against His power? But He is also All-Wise and if we were as wise as He is, we should do as He does! Moreover, He is all Goodness and He is ever full of love. Judged of according to the Divine understanding, everything that He wills must be right. Why, then, shall I dare contend against His strength, His wisdom, and His love? It must be useless to do so. Who has resisted His will? Who could succeed if He did?

Next, *it would be mischievous*, and would be sure to bring a greater evil upon us if we did resist. Had this king Rehoboam gone out to fight with the far greater tribes which had revolted, it might have resulted in the desolation of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem. He was much wiser in putting up his sword into its sheath, for it would have been disastrous to the last degree for him to break the command of God and go to war against Israel. And depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, there is no way of bringing afflictions upon ourselves like refusing to bear afflictions! If we will not bear the yoke that is laid upon us and heed the gentle tugging of the rein, then the goad and the whip will be used upon us. Nothing involves us in so much sorrow as our refusal to submit to sorrow. If we will not take up the cross, the cross, perhaps, will take us up—and that is a far worse lot than the other! Endure, submit, acquiesce—it is the easiest way, after all—for if you are a child of God and you rebel against Him, you will have to smart for it. But if you are *not* His child, and you rebel, like proud Pharaoh, God will set you up to be a monument for men to wonder at as they see how sternly Jehovah deals with stubborn sinners who say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Whenever, therefore, a thing is distinctly from the Lord, it is not to be resisted.

III. Now I come to what may be more interesting to you, that is, to make a practical application of this subject, for THIS GENERAL PRINCIPLE HAS MANY SPECIAL APPLICATIONS. I believe it often happens that events are most distinctly from the Lord and when it is so, our right and proper way is to yield to them.

I could narrate many very amazing things that have happened to me, but I will not. Only I am reminded, just now, of one that I *will* tell you. There sat, one Lord's-Day, in that left-hand gallery, a young Hindu gentleman wearing a scarlet sash. I preached that morning from this text, "What if your father answers you roughly?" [Sermon #1188, Volume 20—*A Word for the Persecuted*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] and I had hardly reached the vestry at the back before this young Hindu gentleman was there with an aged man, who is now with God—a well-known Christian man—and all in a hurry the young man said, "Sir, has Mr. E____

told you about me?" "No," I said, "I have not seen him for months. What could he have told me about you?" "Are you sure that you never heard of me before?" "To my knowledge, I never heard of you and never saw you before." "Well then, Sir," he said, "there *is* a God and that God is in this place!" "How so?" I asked. "Last night, I told this gentleman here," he answered, "that I was almost persuaded to be a Christian, but that, when I went home to India, I should be disinherited by my father and I felt sure that I should not have the courage to stand out as a Christian. And then my friend said, 'Come and hear Mr. Spurgeon tomorrow morning,' and I came in here and you preached from those words, 'What if your father answers you roughly?' Verily," he said, "the God of the Christians *is* God and He has spoken to me this day."

That was another illustration of our text, "This thing is from Me." Has it not often happened so? The Providential working of the Holy Spirit is a very wonderful subject. They who are the Holy Spirit's servants learn to depend upon Him for every word they are to utter! They sometimes feel their flesh creep and almost every hair on their head stands on end at the way in which they have unconsciously spoken so as to depict to the very life the character of their hearers—casual hearers, perhaps—as if they had photographed them though they knew them not! Oh, you who are the Lord's workers, commit yourselves to God's guidance! The more you can do it, the better, for often and often you will have to say of an event that happens to you, "This thing is from the Lord."

Again, dear Friends, another case in which this principle applies is *when severe afflictions arise*. I think that, of all afflictions to which we should bow most readily, those take the first place that are distinctly from the Lord. For instance, the deaths of dear friends, or when we cannot accuse ourselves of having done anything that can have contributed to the affliction that has come upon us, or when we have suffered losses in business though we have been engaged honestly and industriously in doing all we can to provide things honest in the sight of all men. There are some afflictions which remind me of a term which I have seen in the charters of ships—"the act of God." Certain calamities at sea are called "the act of God." So there are certain events in life which may be very terrible and very sorrowful, but if they are the act of God, they come to us thus *distinguished*, "This is from God." Will you not accept it from the Lord? "Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" Will we not say, with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"? "This thing is from Me." O you who are His children, accept the chastisement from your Father's hand and kiss the rod with which He strikes you!

Sometimes, also, we are troubled by certain disquieting plans proposed by our friends or our children. We do not like their schemes and we say, "No, do not act so. It seems to me to be quite wrong." Yet, sometimes, a boy will do this and that, or a friend has made up his mind to take a certain course and, at last, when you have pleaded, persuaded, urged and done your best to turn them from their purpose, if the thought should creep into your mind, "Perhaps, this thing is from God," then stop your persuasions, as Paul's friends, when he would not be persuaded, ceased to argue with him. Sometimes, that which seems to be a great

mistake may, nevertheless, in the hand of God, prove to be the right course. Our judgment is but fallible, but the judgment of the Most High is always correct. Struggle not too long, lest you bring yourself into another sorrow—but be willing to yield at the right time, saying, "Perhaps, this thing is from the Lord."

A very pleasant phase of this same Truth of God is *when some singular mercy comes*. Have not many of you experienced some very remarkable deliverances? Has not God been pleased to open for you rivers in the desert and waters in high places where waters are not usually found? Well, whenever singular and startling mercy comes to you, say, "This is from God." It is a delightful thing when you get a present from a very choice friend who says, "This is from me." You value it all the more because of the person from whom it comes. If you have nothing but a crust of bread, take your knife and cut it, and say, "This is from the Lord." But if He has given you a downy bed on which to rest your weary limbs and if He has indulged you with many luxuries, say, "This is from the Lord." And everything shall be the brighter and the better to you because He gave it to you. It is the best part of the gift! Often, a little thing which we might despise in itself, becomes invaluable because of the giver—and all your life shall be full of rich treasure, yes, with very "curios" worthy to be stored away and looked at with admiration throughout the rest of your days because—"This is from Me," is so clearly written upon them all.

Still applying the principle of our text, let me remind you that when a man receives a very striking warning, he ought to hear a voice at the back of it, saying, "This thing is from Me." When near to die, wrecked, almost aground, or delivered out of an awful accident, if such has been your case, hear, Man, out of all the hurry-burly from which you have escaped, "This is from Me." A soldier, who has heard the bullets whistle by his ear, or who comes out of a battle deprived of a limb but still alive, should hear this voice, "This is from Me." Oh, that men would hear the voice of God and turn from their sins! If the Lord has been so gracious as to spare your life, count that His long-suffering means repentance to you and that His sparing you is a call to you to give up your sins and turn to Him!

The same principle applies when it is not a striking warning, but when it happens that men have some *tender emotions stealing over them*. Some of you to whom I am speaking are unconverted, but there have been times when, in the House of God, you have felt very strange. You may not have actually prayed, but you have *almost* prayed that you might pray! "Please God, once I get home," you have said, "I will go to my room and fall upon my knees before You." Have not even the most thoughtless of you, when alone, felt as if you must *think*? In the watches of the night, have you not been made to consider? A policeman who came to join the Church this week, said to me, "Often, when I tread my solitary beat, I feel as if I must think of God. He seems so very near to me when there is not a sound to be heard except the tread of my own feet."

Well, if ever you feel that, yield to it! O dear Hearts, if ever you find an unusual softness stealing over you, do not resist it! It may be that it is the blessed Spirit come to emancipate you from your obstinacy and hardness—and to bring you into the new life—the life of tenderness and love!

When He draws you, run after Him! Let tender impulse and gentle drawing suffice you, for all is for your good. Yield yourselves to the Spirit's influence even now! While He bids you, believe in Jesus and live! While He whispers to you, "Repent," repent and be converted! God grant it, in His infinite mercy!

Our time has gone, but may what has been spoken be remembered throughout eternity because it can truly be said, "This thing is from Me, says the Lord."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 KINGS 11:40-43; 12.

God threatened Solomon, on account of his setting up other gods, that He would tear away a great part of the kingdom from him and that He would set up another king in his place.

1 Kings 11:40-43. *Solomon sought, therefore, to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David, his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.* After great mountains there usually come low hills. After Solomon comes Rehoboam. Grace does not run in the blood, we may be sure, for even human wisdom does not descend from father to son. There is no necessary transmission of gifts and talents, much less of Grace, from one generation to another.

1 Kings 12:1-3. *And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt), that they sent and called him.* It was a sure sign of great discontent when the people sent for a rebel to be their spokesman!

3, 4. *And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, Your father made our yoke grievous. Now, therefore, make you the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve you.* This was a very natural request. These Oriental monarchs took their thrones as by a kind of Divine right and there was a tendency among the people to demand something like a constitution, some regulations by which they should not be so heavily oppressed. I do not know whether they had been oppressed by Solomon or not. Certainly, the realm as a whole was greatly enriched under his government, but the wisest ruler must not expect that he will have the uniform love of the people—there will be come discontented ones in every community.

5. *And he said to them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.* One commentator says that it is the only sign of wisdom that there was in Rehoboam, that he took three days to consider the answer to this question. Perhaps if he had answered it rightly, it would have been better if answered immediately. Still, it is a good rule, when there is an important question before you, to take time

to consider it. The mischievous point is that Rehoboam did not wait upon *God* for guidance in this emergency. Had he been like his grandfather, David, those three days would have been spent with God in prayer—and he would have come back with a greater wisdom than even his father, Solomon, possessed, to answer the people in this thing. We often blunder over very ample matters when we speak without asking guidance of God. But in the most intricate circumstances our course will be perfectly clear if we commit our way to the Lord.

6-8. *And King Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon, his father, while he yet lived, and said, How do you advise that I may answer this people? And they spoke to him, saying, If you will be a servant to this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that had grown up with him, and which stood before him.* He was probably a man 40 years of age and, therefore, no longer young, but he had, all the while, been playing the part of a young man. He had not been old in wisdom when he was young in years—it would have been well for him if he had been.

9-11. *And he said to them, What counsel give you that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying Make the yoke which your father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, Thus shall you speak to this people that spoke to you, saying, Your father made our yoke heavy, but make you it lighter to us; thus shall you say to them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did load you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father has chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.* Old men are not always wise and young men are not always wise—he who consults with only men shall yet learn the truth of this verse, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." Among Rehoboam's counselors, the old men had no real principle to guide them. They said to the king, in effect, "Just butter these people with soft words, delude and deceive them with the idea that you are going to yield to them and then, when you once get the reins into your own hands, you can govern the nation as you like."

This was a wicked policy, but the young men said to the king, "No, no, no! Do not pretend that you will listen to the people. There is nothing like putting a bold face on it and just letting the people know that you will not yield to them. They will be startled by what you say—have you not the authority and example of your father, Solomon? Nobody ever dared speak a word of this kind to *him*, so put it down at once and be bold." There is no principle, you see, about the advice in either case—it is all policy, but the latter policy is sure *not* to succeed. I counsel you, Brothers—no, I will give you no counsel except that I counsel you to take counsel of God! Wait upon Him, for He knows what you should do in every difficulty that may arise. If Rehoboam had only had wits enough and Grace enough to lay this case before his God, He would have given him somewhat of the largeness of heart and the wisdom which He gave to His father, Solomon.

12-15. *So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; and spoke to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Therefore the king hearkened not to the people; for the cause was from the LORD.* The great, deep, mysterious Providence of God was quietly working even behind the folly and the domineering pride of this foolish man!

15, 16. *That He might perform His saying, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not to them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents O Israel: now see to your own house, David. So Israel departed to their tents.* He that speaks roughly must expect to be answered roughly. Let us learn from this incident as one might who sees the warning light of a beacon and tacks his ship to avoid the rock on which it is placed.

17, 18. *But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute.* Having made trouble, the king tried to make peace. He selected one of the ancient officers of his father, Solomon, to be his ambassador, but he selected the very worst that he could have found, "Adoram, who was over the tribute." The man who had been a leader in exactions from the people, or who had been *thought* to be so, was not the one to act as peace-maker!

18-20. *And all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David to this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.* See what mischief may be done by one foolish man! And, let me add, see what evil may come of the ill conduct of a wise man! Some think that Rehoboam was Solomon's only son, though he had a multitude of wives. That I cannot tell, but it is an amazing thing that so wise a man should have but one son mentioned, here, and that he should be such a foolish one. Yet what could be expected to come out of such a family as Solomon's? He whose own house is so disorderly as his was must expect that those who come after him will be no better than they should be. Blessed is that home where the Lord is the Master, where His Law is loved and His Word is obeyed!

21-24. *And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. But the Word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying Speak to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus says the*

LORD, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me. They hearkened, therefore, to the Word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the Word of the LORD. It is a very striking fact that this one Prophet did but speak in God's name and that vast host disbanded in obedience to his word! It gives us some hope concerning Rehoboam, yet we cannot be sure that it was he who was thus obedient to the Prophet—the people may have been better than their king. At any rate, they did not fight against their brethren, but they went their way. Oh, that God's servants in these days could speak with anything like such power as Shemaiah possessed!

25-27. *Then Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from there, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the House of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah.* Jeroboam is moved by policy, you see. It is very hard, I believe, to be a ruler over men and yet to be a servant of God. There seems to be connected with politics in every country something that besmears the mind and defiles the hand that touches it. The king of Judah had but little wit and this king of Israel has too much cunning—he is a far-seeing man and perceives that if the people go up to Jerusalem to worship—they may, by-and-by, return their allegiance to the house of David.

28. *Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said to them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold your gods, O Israel which brought you up out of the land of Egypt!* Truly, history repeats itself—only if it is bad history, it is apt to grow worse! "Behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." This is almost exactly what they said in Aaron's days when he made the ox which Scripture sarcastically calls a calf, the Egyptian image of strength. Jeroboam makes not merely *one* calf, but two—and he speaks of them in nearly the same language as they used concerning the golden calf in the wilderness—"Behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

29, 30. *And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Daniel. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even to Dan.* I suppose that Jeroboam did not mean to draw them away from worshipping Jehovah, but he would have Jehovah worshipped under some visible image, and not according to the rule which God had laid down. That is just where mischief often begins, both in the Church and in the world. Men are willing to worship God if they are allowed to have a ritual and symbols which they have themselves devised and so, instead of the Divine simplicity of the New Testament, they have many things added, things to please the taste, aesthetic, beautiful, sensuous—all of which take the mind off from that sublime worship of the invisible God which alone can be acceptable before Him. It is not for us to determine how we will worship God—we are to worship Him after His own manner, for His Commandments are still in force—"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make to you any engraved image, or any like-

ness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them nor serve them." "Well, but the Cross," someone says, "surely that is a truly venerable symbol?" Let it be as venerable as you please, but we must not use it in Divine worship! The ox was supposed to set forth strength—surely it was an admirable emblem of the Almighty—yet God pours contempt upon it when He bids His Inspired servants to speak of it as the image of an ox that eats grass, as if that could be any symbol of the Most High! "This thing became a sin."

31. *And he made an house of high places and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.* For the sons of Levi went over to Judah and remained faithful to God. And the better sort of people probably dreaded to assume the office to which God had called the sons of Levi—none would undertake it but the very lowest of the people.

32. *And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like to the feast that is in Judah.* He shifted the month, but retained the day—the fifteenth day of the eighth month instead of the seventh. "That was quite unimportant," say some. I do not agree with them, for *nothing* is unimportant that has to do with the Law of God's House! Disobedience may be more plainly seen in some of the non-essentials than in an essential thing. At all events, we have no right to alter jot or tittle of the Divine command.

32, 33. *And he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart.* It is a strong condemnation of anything in religion if it is devised by a man's own heart. We are to do *what* God bids us, *as* God bids us, *when* God bids us and *because* God bids us. But that which is merely of our own free will, ordained and manufactured by ourselves, is practically the worship of *ourselves* and not the worship of God.

33. *And ordained a feast to the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.* Thus Israel was led astray at the very beginning. She came to the crossroads and took the wrong turn. And she went from bad to worse. God save all of us from following her evil example, but may we all serve the one living and true God, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—71 (SONG I), 208, 211.

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

DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN
NO. 2477

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 9, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1886.

"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."
Song of Solomon 2:17.

THE spouse sings, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," so the beloved of the Lord *may be in the dark*. It may be night with her who has a place in the heart of the Well-Beloved. A child of God, who is a child of light, may be, for a while, in darkness. First, darkness comparatively, as compared with the light he has sometimes enjoyed, for days are not always equally bright. Some days are bright with a clear sunshine, other days may be overcast. So the child of God may one day walk with full assurance of faith, in close fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and at another time he may be questioning his interest in the Covenant of Grace and may be rather sighing than singing, rather mourning than rejoicing. The child of God may be, then, in comparative darkness.

Yes, and he may be in positive darkness. It may be very black with him and he may be obliged to cry, "I see no signs of returning day." Sometimes, neither sun nor moon appears for a long season to cheer the Believer in the dark. This may arise partly through sickness of body. There are sicknesses of the body which, in a very peculiar way, touch the soul—exquisite pain may yet be attended with great brightness and joy—but there are certain other illnesses which influence us in another way. Terrible depressions come over us. We walk in darkness and see no light. I should not like to guess how heavy a true heart may sometimes become—sometimes it is necessary we are in heaviness through manifold trials. There is not only a necessity for the trials, but also for the heaviness which comes out of them. It is not always that a man can gather himself together and defy the fierce blasts and walk through fire and through water with heavenly equanimity. No, Brothers and Sisters, "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" And that wounded spirit may be the portion of some of the very fairest of the sons of God! Indeed, the Lord has some weakly, sickly sons who, nevertheless, are the very pick of His family. It is not always the strong ones by whom He sets the most store, but, sometimes, those that seem to be driven into a corner—whose days are spent in mourning—are among the most precious in His sight! Yes, the

darkness of the child of God may be comparative darkness and it may, to a great extent, be positive darkness.

But yet it can only be temporary darkness. The same text which suggests night promises dawn—"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," says the song of the spouse. Perhaps no text is more frequently upon my lips than is this one. I do not think that any passage of Scripture more often recurs to my heart when I am alone. And just now I feel that there is a gathering gloom over the Church and over the world. It seems as if night were coming on and such a night as makes one sigh and cry, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

I am going to speak upon three things which are in our text. The first will be *our prospect*. We have a prospect that the day will break and the shadows flee away. Secondly, *our posture*—"until the day breaks and the shadows flee away." Thirdly, *our petition*—"Turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division." We are content to wait if He will come to us. If gladdened with His Presence, the night shall seem short and we can well endure all that it brings! Let the prayer of our text be put up by any of you who are waiting in the darkness and may it be speedily answered in your happy experience!

I. First of all, let us consider OUR PROSPECT. Our prospect is that the day *will* break and that the shadows *will* flee away. We may read this passage in many ways and apply it to different cases.

Think, first, of *the child of God who is full of doubt*. He is afraid that, after all, his supposed conversion was not a true one, and that he has proved it to be false by his own misbehavior. He is afraid, I scarcely know of what, for so many fears crowd in upon him. He is crying to God to remove his doubts and to let him once again—

"Read his title clear
To mansions in the skies."

His eyes are looking toward the Cross and somehow he has a hope, if not quite a persuasion, that he will find light in Christ, where so many others have found it. I would encourage that hope till it becomes a firm conviction and a full expectation! The day *will* break for you, dear mourner! The shadows *will* yet flee away. While I say that, I feel able to speak with great confidence, for my eyes, as they look round on this congregation, detect many Brothers and Sisters with whom I have conversed in the cloudy and dark day. We have prayed together, dear Friends—have we not? I have repeated in your hearing those precious promises which are the pillows of our hope, yet, at the time, it seemed as if you would never be cheered or comforted. Friends who lived with you grieved much to see you so sad. They could not understand how such as you who have lived so scrupulously as you believed to be right, should, nevertheless, come into sadness and despondency!

Well, you have come out of that state, have you not? I can almost catch the bright expression in your eyes as you flash back the response, "It is so, Sir! We can sing among the loudest, now. We can leap as a hart and the tongue that once was dumb can now sing praises to the Lord

who delivered us." The reason for this great change is that you clung to Christ even when it seemed to be no use to cling! You had a venturesome faith—when it seemed a risky thing even to believe, you believed—and you kept on believing! And now the day has dawned for you and the shadows have fled away. Well, so shall it be to all who are in the same predicament if they will but trust in the Lord and stay themselves upon our God! Though they walk in darkness and see no light, yet, by-and-by, the day shall break for them, also!

This expression is equally applicable when we come into some *personal sorrow not exactly of a spiritual kind*. I know that God's children are not long without tribulation. As long as the wheat is on the threshing floor, it must expect to feel the flail. Perhaps you have had a bereavement, or you may have had losses in business, or crosses in your family, or you have been sorely afflicted in your own body. And now you are crying to God for deliverance out of your temporal trouble. That deliverance will surely come. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." "I have been young," said David, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken." The Lord will yet light your candle and surround your path with brightness. Only patiently hope and quietly wait—and you shall yet see the salvation of the Lord. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Mark that—you know that part of the verse is true, but so is the rest of it—"but the Lord delivers him out of them all." Clutch at that, for it is equally true! "In the world you shall have tribulation." You know that is true. "Be of good cheer," says Christ, "I have overcome the world." Therefore, expect that you, also, will overcome it through your conquering Lord! Yes, in the darkest of all human sorrows, there is the glad prospect that the day will break and the shadows will flee away!

This is the case again, I believe, on a grander scale with reference *to the depression of religion at the present time*. [1886—EO] Some of us are obliged to go sorrowing when we look upon the state of the Church and the world. We are not accustomed to take gloomy views of things, but we cannot help grieving over what we see. More and more it forces itself upon us that the old-fashioned Gospel is being either neglected or trampled in the dust! The old spirit, the old fire that once burned in the midst of the saints of God, is still there, but it burns very low at present. We need—I cannot say how much we need a revival of pure and undefiled religion in this our day! Will it come? Why should it not come? If we long for it, if we pray for it, if we believe for it, if we work for it and prepare for it, it will certainly come. The day *will* break and the shadows *will* flee away!

The mockers think that they have buried our Lord Jesus Christ. So, perhaps, they have, but He will have a resurrection. The cry is, "Who will roll away the stone for us?" The stone shall be rolled away and He, even the Christ in whom our fathers trusted, the Christ of Luther and of Calvin, of Whitefield and of Wesley—that same Christ shall be among us in the fullness and the glory of His power by the working of the Holy Spirit

upon the hearts of myriads of men! Let us never despair, but, on the contrary, let us brush away the tears from our eyes and begin to look for the light of the morning, for, "the morning comes," and the day will break and the shadows will flee away!

Let me encourage any friends who have been laboring for Christ in any district which has seemed strikingly barren, where the stones of the field have seemed to break the plows. Still believe on, Beloved—that soil which appears most unfruitful will perhaps repay us after a while with a hundred-fold harvest! The prospect may be dark, but, perhaps, dear Friends, it is to be darker yet. We may have worked and seemed to work in vain. Possibly the vanity of all our working is yet to appear still more, but, for all that, "the morning comes." "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." We must not be in the least bit afraid even in the densest darkness, but, on the contrary, look for the coming blessing!

I believe that this is to be the case, also, *in this whole world*. It is still the time of darkness, it is still the hour of shadows. I am no prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, and I cannot foretell what is yet to happen in the earth. It may be that the darkness will deepen still more and that the shadows will multiply and increase—but the Lord will come! When He went up from Olivet, He sent two of His angels down to say, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." He is surely coming and though the date of His return is hidden from our sight, all the signs of the times look as if He might come very speedily! I was reading, the other day, what old Master William Bridge says on this subject—"If our Lord is coming at midnight, He certainly will come very soon, for it cannot be darker than it now is."

That was written *two hundred years ago* and our Lord has not come, yet, and I might say much the same as Master Bridge did! Do not doubt as to Christ's coming because it is delayed. A person lies dying and the report concerning him is, "Well, it does not look as if he could live many hours." You call again and they say, "Well, he still survives, but it seems as if he would scarcely get through the night." Do you go away and say, "Oh, he will not die, for I have expected, for several days, to hear that he has passed away"? Oh, no! But each time you hear the report, you feel, "Well, it is so much nearer the end." And so is our Master's coming! It is getting nearer every hour, so let us keep on expecting it. That glorious Advent shall end our weary waiting days! It shall end our conflicts with infidelity and priestcraft! It shall put an end to all our futile endeavors and when the Great Shepherd shall appear in His Glory, then shall every faithful under-shepherd and all His flock appear with Him—and then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away!

As to the shadows fleeing what are those shadows that are to fly at His approach? The types and shadows of the Ceremonial Law were all finished when Christ appeared the first time. But many shadows still remain—the shadows of our doubts, the grim mysterious shadows of our

fears, the shadows of sin, so black, so dense—the shadows of abounding unbelief—ten thousand shadows! When He comes, these shall all flee away, and with them shall go Heaven and earth—the Heaven and earth that now are, for what are these but shadows? All things that are unsubstantial shall pass away when He appears! When the day breaks, then shall everything but that which is eternal and invisible pass away! We are glad that it shall be so and we pray that soon the day may break and the shadows flee away. This, then, is our prospect.

II. Now I want to occupy a few minutes of your time in considering OUR POSTURE "until the day breaks and the shadows flee away." We are here, like soldiers on guard, waiting for the dawn. It is night and the night is deepening—how shall we occupy ourselves until the day breaks and the shadows flee away?

Well, first, we will wait in the darkness with *patient endurance* as long as God appoints it. Whatever of shadow is yet to come, whatever of cold damp air and dews of the night is yet to fall upon us, we will bear it. Soldiers of the Cross, you must not wish to avoid these shadows! He who has called you to this service knew that it would be nighttime and He called you to night duty. And being put upon the night watch, stay at your post. It is not for any of us to say, "We will desert because it is so dark." Has not the thought sometimes crossed your mind, "I am not succeeding—I will run away"? Have you not often felt, like Jonah, that you would go to Tarshish that you might escape from delivering your Master's message? Oh, do not! The day will break and the shadows flee away—and until then, watch through the night and fear not the shadows! Play the man, remembering through what a sevenfold night your Master passed, when, in Gethsemane, He endured even to a bloody sweat for you! When, on the Cross, even His mid-day was midnight—what must have been the darkness over His spirit? He bore it—then *you* bear it. Let no thought of fear pass over your mind, or, if it does, let not your heart be troubled, but rise above your fear until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Be of good courage, soldiers of Christ, and still wait on in patient endurance.

What are we to do, next, until the day breaks? Why, let there be *hopeful watching*. Keep your eyes towards the East and look for the first gray sign of the coming morning. "Watch!" Oh, how little is done of this kind of work! We scarcely watch as we ought against the devil, but how little do we watch for the coming of our Master! Look for every sign of His appearing and be always listening for the sound of His chariot wheels. Keep the candle burning in the window to let Him see that you are awake. Keep the door on the latch, that when He comes you may quickly open to Him. Hopefully watch until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

Then, further, dear Friends, while we maintain patient endurance and hopeful watching, let us give each other mutual encouragement. Men who have been shipwrecked will give each other a hand and say, "Brother, perhaps we shall escape after all." Now that it is midnight all around, let every Christian give his fellow soldier a grip of his hand.

Courage, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has not forgotten us! We are in the dark and cannot see Him, but He can see us and He knows all about us—maybe He will come walking on the stormy waters in the middle watch of the night when our little boat seems ready to be sunk beneath the waves by the boisterous wind! I seem, just now, as though I were a soldier in this great guardroom and as if we were sitting in these shadows and, perhaps, in the darkness, and seemed very much dispirited. And I would say to you, my comrades, "Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us cheer up. The Lord has appeared to one and another of us. He has given to some of us the light of His Countenance and He is coming back to welcome us all to Himself. Let us not be dismayed—our glorious Leader forgets not the weakest and feeblest of us, neither is any part of the battlefield beyond the reach of the great Captain's eyes! He sees which way the struggle is going and He has innumerable reserves which He will bring up at the right time. I seem to hear the music of His horse's hoofs even now. He is coming who shall turn the scale in the worst moment of the conflict, for the battle is the Lord's and He will deliver the enemy into our hands! Let no man's heart fail him because of yonder Goliath! The God who has raised up men to slay the lion and the bear will yet find a David and a smooth stone to kill this mighty giant. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, be of good courage."

What further should we do in the dark? Well, one of the best things to do in the dark is *to stand still and keep our place*. "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," let us keep our place and firmly maintain our position. A Brother who sat at the back of me, 20 years ago, dropped in, again, recently to hear me preach. And he said to me, after the service, that he had been in America and come over here again after 20 years, and he added, "It is the same old story, Spurgeon, as when I was here before—you are sticking to the same old Gospel" I replied, "Yes, and if you will come in 20 years' time, if God spares me, I shall still be sticking to the same old Gospel, for I have nailed my colors to the mast and I do not mean to have anything to do with this new-fangled progressive theology." To me, the Gospel came to perfection long ago in the Person of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and it can never go beyond that perfection! We preach nothing but that Gospel which has saved our own souls and saved the souls of the myriads who have gone to their eternal rest—and we do not intend preaching anything else until somebody can find us something better—and that will not be to-morrow, nor the day after, nor as long as the world stands! It is dark, very dark, so we just stay where we are, in steadfast confidence in the Lord who has placed us where we are! We are not going to plunge on in a reckless manner—we mean to look before we leap and as it is too dark to look, we will not leap, but will just abide here hard by the Cross, battling with every adversary of the Truth of God as long as we have a right hand to move in the name of the Almighty God, "until the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

What else ought we to do? Keep up a careful separateness from the works of darkness that are going on all around us. If it seems dark to

you, gather up your skirts, and gird up your loins! The more sin abounds in the world, the more ought the Church of God to seek after the strictest holiness. If ever there was an age that needed back, again, the sternest form of Puritanism, it is this age! If ever there was a time when we needed the old original stamp of Methodists, we need them now—a people separated to God, a people that have nothing to do but to please God and to save souls—a people that will not in any way bow themselves to the fashions of the time! For my part, I would like to see a George Fox come back among us, yes—Quaker as he was—to bear such a testimony as he did in the power of the Spirit of God against the evils of his time. God make us to feel that now, in the dark, we *cannot* be as lenient as we might have been in brighter days towards the sin that surrounds us!

Are any of you tempted into "society," so-called, and into the ways of that society? Every now and then those who read the papers get some little idea of what is going on in "society." The stench that comes from "society" tells us what it must be like and makes us wish to stay clear of it! The awful revelations that were once before made which caused us to be sick with shame and sorrow, might be made again, for there is just the same foulness and filthiness beneath the surface of the supposed greater decency. O Christian people, if you could but know, as the most of you ought *not* to know, how bad this world is, you would not begin to talk about its wonderful improvements, or to question the doctrine of human depravity! We are going on, according to some teachers, by, "evolution," into *something*—if I might predict what it is, I would say that it is into *devils* that many men are being evolved! They are going down, down, down, except where eternal Grace is begetting in the heart of men a higher and better and nobler nature which must bear its protest against the ignorance or hypocrisy which this day talks about—the improvements of our civilization and the progress that we are making towards God! "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," keep yourselves to your Lord and hear this voice sounding through the darkness—the voice of Wisdom that sees more than you see—"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 to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty."

"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," lift your hands to Heaven and pledge yourselves to walk a separate pilgrim life until He comes before whose face Heaven and earth shall flee away!

III. Now I close by noticing OUR PETITION—"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

I am not going to preach upon that part of our text, but only just urge you to turn it into prayer. We have to wait, Brothers and Sisters—we have to wait in the darkness, cheered, here and there, with the light from a golden lamp that glows with the Light of God. The world lies in darkness, but we are of God, little children, therefore this must be our prayer to our Well-Beloved, "*Come to us.*" "Turn to me, O my Beloved, for You

have turned away from me, or from Your Church. Turn again, I beseech You. Pardon my lukewarmness, forgive my indifference. Turn to me again, my Beloved. O You Husband of my soul, if I have grieved You, and You have hidden Your face from me, turn again to me! Smile, for then shall the day break and the shadows flee away! Come to me, my Lord, visit me once again." Put up that prayer, Beloved.

The prayer of the spouse is in this poetic form—"*Come over the mountains of division.*" As we look out into the darkness, what little light there is appears to reveal to us Alp upon Alp, mountain upon mountain and our Beloved seems divided from us by all those hills. Now our prayer is that He would come over the top of them—we cannot go over the top of them to Him—but He can come over the top of them to us, if He thinks fit to do so. Like the hinds' feet, this blessed Hind of the morning can come skipping over the hills with utmost speed to visit and to deliver us! Make this your prayer, "Great Master, sweet Beloved One, come over the mountains of division and come quickly, like a roe or a young hart! Come easily, come unexpectedly! As roes and harts let no man know when they will come, so come You to me." I wish that, even while we are sitting here, our Divine Lord would come to our spirits with all His ravishing charms, so that we might cry, "Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib."

Have you never felt an influence steal over you which has lifted you out of yourself and made you go as on burning wheels with axles hot with speed where before you had been sluggish and dull? Our Well-Beloved can come and visit us all of a sudden, without any trouble to Himself. It cost Him His life's blood to come to earth to save us—it will cost Him nothing to come just now to bless us! Remember what He has already done, for, having done so much, He will not deny you the lesser blessing of coming to you. Are you saved by His Grace? Then do not think that He will refuse you fellowship with Himself!

Pray for it now. Before we come to the Communion Table, pray for it and while you are sitting there, let this be your cry, "Come to me, my Beloved, over the hills of division! Come as a roe or a young hart." And He *will* come to you. Put up your prayer in the sweet words we sang just now—

"When will You come to me, Lord?
O come, my Lord most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I'm blest when You are near!
When will You come to me, Lord?
Until You do appear,
I count each moment for a day,
Each minute for a year."

Oh, that this might be one of those happy seasons when you shall not be fed by the preacher's talk, but by the Master revealing Himself to you! May God graciously grant it!

I may be addressing some who long to find the Savior. This morning I got from a friend who came in to see me, an illustration which I will give

to you. He told me—and oh, how he made my heart rejoice!—that six years ago he was, so the Apostle says, "going about to establish his own righteousness." He is a man of reputation and when a friend sent him some of my sermons to read, he thought to himself, "What do I need these sermons for? I am as good as any man can be." But he did read them and the friend asked him, "Have you read those sermons of Mr. Spurgeon's that I sent you?" "Yes," he replied, "I have, but I have got no good out of them." "Why not?" "Why," he said, "he has spoiled me! He has dashed my hopes to the ground. He has taken away my comfort and my joy. I thought myself as good as anybody living and he has made me feel as if I were rotten right through." "Oh," said his friend, "that medicine is working well! You must take some more of it." But the more of the sermons he read, the more unhappy he became, the more he saw the hollowness of all his former hopes—and he came into a great darkness—ad the day did *not* break and the shadows did *not* flee away!

But, all of a sudden, he was brought out into the light, by God's Grace! As he told me the story, this morning, his eyes were wet and so were mine. This is how the Lord led him into peace. I wish the telling of it might bring the same blessing to some of you. He said, "I went with my friend to fish for salmon in Loch Awe. I threw a fly and as I threw it, a fish leaped up and took it in a moment." "There," said the friend to him, "that is what you have to do with Christ, what that fish did with your fly! I am sure I do not know whether the fly took the fish, or the fish took the fly—it was both, the bait took the fish—and the fish took the bait. Do just so with Christ and do not ask any questions. Leap up at Him, take Him in, lay hold of Him!" The man did so and at once he was saved! I wish that somebody else would do the same. I never ask you to answer the question whether it is Christ who takes you or you who take Christ, for both things will happen at the same moment. Will you have Him? Will you have Him? If you will have Him, He has you! If you are willing to have Christ, Christ has already made you willing in the day of His power! Throw yourself upon Christ, as the salmon opened his mouth and took in the bait, so you take Christ into your very soul!

Writing to the Romans, Paul says, "The Word is near you, even in your mouth." What is the thing to do with that which is in your mouth when you want to keep it? Why, swallow it, of course! Do so with Christ! Let Him go right down into your soul! Put Him into your mouth, as it were, while I am preaching. Accept Him, receive Him and He is yours directly. *Then* shall the day break and the shadows flee away and your Beloved shall have come to you over the mountains of division, never to leave you, but to abide with you forever! O blessed Spirit of God, grant all here Divine Grace to swallow Christ, now, for only You can grant them life that they may swallow! God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:22-48.

Verses 22-23. *And He said to His disciples, Therefore I say to 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.* If you are God's servants, He will clothe you. There is no servitor of the Lord of Hosts who will have to go without his necessities and not one who belongs to His vast household, even though he is but a menial in God's kitchen, who will ever be permitted to starve.

24-26. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you, by worrying, can add to his stature one cubit? If you, then, are not able to do that thing which is least, why are you anxious for the rest?* How little you can do for yourself after all! Therefore, leave the whole with God—

"Make you His service your delight,
He'll make your needs His care."

The best cure for the cares of this life is to care much to please God! If we loved Him better, we should love the world far less, and be less troubled about our portion in it.

27, 28. *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say to you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of those. 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?* What a title to address us—"O you of little faith!"—but, depend upon it, we deserve it when we are full of anxious care. Much care indicates little faith. When faith is strong, she casts all her care on Him who cares for us. Oh, that we could but be rid of that which, after all, is not our business, and give our whole mind, heart and soul to what *is* our business, namely, to please our Creator, our Redeemer, our Friend!

29, 30. *And seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind. For all those things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* Is not that a sweet word? "Your Father knows that you have need of these things." There used to be a hymn which was sung a good deal at revival meetings. It had a very sweet refrain, "This my Father knows." If you cannot, yourselves, understand your case, your Father knows all about it. If you cannot make other people comprehend it, yet your Father knows all that needs to be known. Whatever you really require, even for the present life, need not be any cause of anxiety to you, Believers, for "your Father knows that you have need of these things." There is no need, therefore, for you to seek "what you shall eat, or what you shall drink."

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all those things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* He gives others a good many things, but He will give you the Kingdom! Just as Abraham gave portions to the sons of Keturah and sent them away, but Isaac had the Covenant blessing, so, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

33. *Sell what you have, and give alms.* Not only give to the poor till you pinch yourself, but even pinch yourself to do it!

33-35. *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. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.* Never be undressed, as it were, in a moral or spiritual sense—"Let your loins be girded about." Never be in the dark, spiritually. Keep in the Light of God—let your lamp be always burning. Not only walk in the Light of God, but let your light shine before men.

36. *And you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately.* Brothers and Sisters, whatever theory we hold about the future, may God grant that it may never prevent our looking for the coming of Christ as an event which may happen at any moment—and being on the watch for it as a matter the date of which we do not know! The practical essence of all Scriptural teaching upon that subject is just this, "You yourselves be like men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding."

37. *Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say to you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* I will not attempt to fully explain this passage of Scripture in the few moments which I can give to it, but it is very wonderful. Our Lord has been here once and girded Himself to serve us, but is it not extraordinary that here is an intimation of a second girding of Himself that He may serve us? Oh, how fond is Christ of being the Servant of servants, ministering to those who delight to minister to Him! What an honor does the Captain of our salvation put upon the lowest soldiers in this war when He declares that if we are found faithful, He will gird Himself and come forth 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.* Perhaps He will not come when the modern "prophets" say that He will appear, but He will come when least of all He is expected. Therefore, expect the unexpected! Look for your Lord to come when the many go to sleep. Perhaps, while yet I am speaking, before this gathered assembly shall disperse, there may be heard the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet Him!" Are our loins girded? Are our lamps burning? God bless His own truth to the effecting of both those ends!

41-43. *Then Peter said to Him, Lord, speak You this parable to 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. Distributing the Bread of Life, giving milk to babes and meat to strong men—not behaving as if he were master, but acting only as a steward who distributes, not his own—but his Master's stores. Oh, that we who are ministers of Christ may be always doing this! So shall we obtain the blessing promised to "that servant, whom his *master*, when he comes, shall find so doing."

44, 45. *Of a truth I say to you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, My master delays his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunk.* First he becomes lordly. He acts as if he were master, beats his fellow servants. He is harsh and ungenerous and assumes great dignity and gives himself airs. Let him mind what he is doing, for his master will come and catch him usurping his place. The next danger is that he begins to enjoy himself, to be voluptuous, self-indulgent—"To eat and drink, and to be drunk." He becomes intoxicated with pride! He is carried away with divers errors and, in making much of himself, he loses his head and acts like a fool.

46. *The master 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 two, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* Truly, our Lord uses very strong words! The Savior is not one of your effeminate preachers like those of modern times who seem as if the very word, "Hell," would burn their lips, and who will not warn men to flee from the wrath to come! It is an unkind and heartless lack of humanity which prevents their being faithful to the souls of men. The great Lord, who is full of tenderness, does not hesitate to use the sternest figure and the most terrible language, simply because He does not consult His own feelings but aims at the highest good of those with whom He deals! This is a terrible word for us if we are unfaithful at the last—"He will cut him in two, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." It is an awful thing that the unfaithful servant gets his portion with those who do not believe in Christ. The Lord preserve all of us from such a doom!

47, 48. *And that servant, which knew his master's will, and prepared not 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 a few stripes. For to whomever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Under the shadow of such solemn texts as these, let us draw near to God in earnest prayer.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—810, 766.

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

CHRIST'S PERFECTION AND PRECEDENCE
NO. 2478

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 16, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1869.

"My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand."
Song of Solomon 5:10.

THE spouse in this verse styles her Lord, "my Beloved," from which it is easy for us to gather that it is of the utmost importance that our heart's affection should be really and truly set upon Christ Jesus, our Lord. We must trust Him and we must love Him. Christ on the Cross saves us when He becomes to us Christ in the heart. It is of small service for us to know of Christ if we do not really trust and love Him. It will be of little use for us to talk of Him unless our heart is really welded and knit to Him. Let us, therefore, dear Friends, commence this evening's meditation with a solemn enquiry made by each one for himself or herself, "Can I call the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified on Calvary, but who now reigns at the right hand of the Father—can I truly call Him, 'my Beloved'?" There may be a question raised in your soul by a natural anxiety lest you should presume, but be not content until you have solemnly and seriously searched your hearts, to know whether in very deed and truth an ardent affection burns within your spirit towards the Lord Jesus. It were better for you that you had never been born than that you should live and die without love to Christ. Remember that startling sentence of the Apostle Paul which is so solemn that I can scarcely quote it without tears, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let Him be Anathema Maranatha," that is, "let Him be accursed at the coming of the Lord." It will be so with you, dear Friends, however shining your moral attributes may have been, however you may have carved your name upon the rock of history—you will go down to endless misery and shame unless your heart has in it a vital sense of true religion—a sincere love to the crucified Christ of Calvary!

If this important personal enquiry has had its due weight upon our minds, it may lead us to another consideration, namely, that it is a blessed thing, if we love Christ, to be able to speak about our affection for Him as a matter of course and a matter of *fact*—not as a thing that hangs trembling in the balance, but as an ascertained Truth of God and certainty. The spouse does not speak of "Him whom I *hope* to love, by-and-by," or, of "Him whom I *trust* I shall one day know," but she calls Him, without question or qualification, "my Beloved." She is quite sure about this blessed relationship! She raises no doubts and she has no fears concerning it. I do not say that if any man has a doubt about his

love to Christ, he need, therefore, necessarily condemn himself, but I do say that he must never be content to continue in such a state!

Perhaps they who love the Master best are the very people who will be the most likely to have such a high opinion of the love which He deserves that they will often chide themselves that they do not love Him at all, when they see how little their love is compared with that perfection of affection which He deserves. We must not affirm that the question of anxiety is *sinful*—it is painful—and anxiety, if it is not Divinely removed, will *become* sinful, but the anxiety is not so in itself. Yet, Beloved, I beseech you to press on beyond this stage of your pilgrim journey. Do not be content to live on hopes, fears, perhapses and surmises. You would not like to think that, *perhaps*, you loved your child, or your husband, or your friend. You would not care to say, "I *hope* I love virtue, I *hope* I love honesty"—but it is a baser thing, still, for us to allow a question to exist as to whether we love Him who is dearer than our own kindred and who is better than any one moral excellence, seeing that He is the combination of all excellences! O Beloved, seek to reach the blessed heights of full assurance, that each one of you may be able to say of Christ, "This is *my* Beloved and this is *my* Friend—I would as soon doubt my own existence as doubt the love that burns within my heart towards Him who has bought me with His precious blood." Sing, as we have often done—

"My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine,
For You all the follies of sin I resign.
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior are Thou,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

If we have reached that stage in our journey heavenwards, it will be well if we go on a step further. Loving our Lord and Savior in our heart and being assured of that love in our inmost conscience after earnest heart-searching, it will be well if we have the courage to never hesitate in the avowal of that love. Our love to Christ is so sacred a passion that it is not to be talked of in all companies. We must not cast our pearls before swine, but, on the other hand, it is so ennobling a passion that we need never blush to acknowledge it in *any* company. If we are ever ashamed of loving Christ, we have good reason to be ashamed of such shameful shame! When you have heard His dear name reviled, did you ever start for fear lest you should be called upon to share His reproach? Did you ever sit silent when you ought to have spoken because Christ was being blasphemed? Did you ever try to make it out to yourself that it was a prudent retirement that shunned the conflict when, in very truth, it was a *hateful cowardice* that turned its back upon the Crucified in the hour of His need? I fear that the charge might be brought against the most of us! If so, let us humbly confess it on our knees, alone, and blush before the Presence of our blessed Master. Remember what we sang just now?—

"Jesus! And shall it ever be?
A mortal man ashamed of Thee!
Ashamed of You, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine thro' endless days?
Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star!
He sheds the beams of light Divine

O'er this benighted soul of mine.
Ashamed of Jesus? Just as soon
Let midnight be ashamed of noon!
'Tis midnight with my soul, till He,
Bright Morning Star, bid darkness flee.
Ashamed of Jesus? That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend!
No! When I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name."

What can there be to be ashamed of in loving Him whom angels love, whom God loves, whom all holy spirits love? What? Not love Him? If He were not, in Himself, God, yet has He been so good to me that I *must* love Him! It is an old proverb that we must speak of friends as we find them, and praise the bridge that carries us over the stream. And here is One in whom we have found such goodness, such kindness, such gentleness and such disinterested affection—One who has done such wonders for us that if we do not love Him and boldly declare that we love Him—we have good reason to be ashamed of ourselves and to hide our heads in confusion forever and ever!

Young people, you who have lately come to love Christ, do not begin as some of your fathers did, in that half-hearted fashion which has continued with them until this day. Alas, there are some professing Christians who have grown gray and yet have scarcely ever dared to speak the name of Christ in company! Yes, some of them have even been ashamed, up to this moment, to be baptized and to come to the Lord's Table. They say that they love Christ and I hope they do, yet up to this hour Baptism has been a cross too heavy for them to bear! And the Lord's Supper has seemed to them to be an ordeal instead of a means of blessing! Play the man, young Christian! Be not ashamed to acknowledge your Lord! If ever there was unfurled in this world a banner which deserved the utmost allegiance of human hearts, it is the blood-stained banner of the Cross! And if ever there was a Leader who deserved that men should speak His praises, not—

"With 'bated breath, and whispering humbleness,"

but with manly enthusiasm, that Leader is the Christ of God who loved you and gave Himself for you! Yes, utter it in the face of a scoffing world! Stand to it in the teeth of a ribald infidel generation! Declare it before the crowd of gainsayers who will mock you to scorn as you pronounce it, "This is my Beloved—the Christ that died, the Christ that always lives at the right hand of God—this is my Beloved, and I am not ashamed to avow Him."

Suppose that we have come as far as this—and I believe that many of us have come so far—it will be our bounden duty to go a step further. Loving Jesus, knowing that we love Him and boldly confessing our love to Him, let us, next, so *study* His Person and His Character that we shall be able to give a reason for the love that is in us to any who make the enquiry, "What is your Beloved more than another Beloved?" You observe that the spouse not only calls Him, "my Beloved," but she describes the complexion of His Countenance and the details relating to His whole Person. She has a word of praise for all His features and all His members!

She knows Him so well that she speaks of Him with a tongue like the pen of a ready writer. So, Beloved, let us study Christ as we come, again, to this Communion Table! You who love and fear Him, neglect not your Bibles. Neglect not that fellowship which, like the light of a candle, shines upon the page of the Bible.

Some of you are studying earthly sciences. Perhaps you give your minds to the classics, or you delight to master the mysteries of mathematics. But oh, take care that this most excellent science, the science of Christ Crucified, is not made to take a second place with you! Always put this science first—try to understand the Glory of your Lord's Person—without beginning of days or end of years! Search into the purity of His Character in all that He was, here below, from His birth to His death. Be conversant with Christ in all His sacred offices. Think much of His precious blood and of all the holy mysteries that cluster around His Cross. Trace Him from Bethlehem to Gabbatha, and then from Gabbatha follow Him in His Resurrection and Ascension along the star-spangled way up to the Throne of His Glory. And let your soul hopefully linger in the full belief of His Second Coming, and in all the Glory that shall surely follow the day of His august appearing. Study Christ! Study Christ so as to be able to tell others of Him and be not slow to communicate to those of an enquiring mind that which you have, yourself, heard, seen and handled of the Word of Life—for so the spouse does in the chapter before us.

This much must suffice by way of introduction, or rather, by way of practical exhortation to such of you as are enlisted beneath Christ's royal banner of love.

Now let us proceed to consider the general description of the Bridegroom given by His spouse in this verse. First, she says, "my Beloved is white and ruddy." These words set forth *His charming complexion*. Secondly, the spouse calls her Beloved, "the chiefest among ten thousand," and so she describes *His personal precedence*.

I. First, then, the spouse says, "my Beloved is white and ruddy." And so she sets HIS CHARMING COMPLEXION.

It seems to me that the spouse intends, by these words, to call attention to two chief characteristics of her Lord's most blessed Person. Had not Solomon often seen the snow-white lambs—the emblems of purity—brought up to the Temple to be offered in sacrifice? "So," said he, "my Beloved is white." Had he not also seen the uplifted knife in the priest's hand—and then seen the ruby stream as it flowed down at the foot of the altar till the white lamb was stained crimson in its own blood? So he puts the two together, the white—the immaculate purity. And the red—the sacrificial blood-shedding. And these two things, whether they are meant in the text or not, are certainly the two essentials of the Christian faith concerning the Person of Christ! And he is no Christian and, indeed, cannot be a Christian who has not well learned and joyously received the two Truths of God which the white and the red here set forth.

Our Lord is, first of all, in Himself, white. That is, *He has immaculate perfection of Character*. As God, in Him is Light and no darkness at all—perfect purity without a trace of sin. He is very God of very God, the Holy

One of Israel. In His Godhead, Jesus Christ is perfection itself. As to His Manhood, the term, whiteness, well describes Him who was born without natural corruption, or taint of hereditary depravity—"that holy Thing"—the Christ of God who became Incarnate, yet without sin. Does not this word, "white" describe Him, also, in His actual life? There was never any sin in Christ. You may challenge every Word of His and you shall find it pure. You may thrust it into the furnace heated seven times hotter than it is known to be heated, yet shall it come forth as it went in, for no dross shall be found in it! As to Christ's actions, they are matchless and perfect in every respect! The two great objectives of His life were the Glory of God and the good of man. So pure, indeed, is the Character of Christ, that even those who have hated His religion and have read the writings of the four Evangelists with no design but to find some ground for mocking—have, nevertheless, been cowed before the majesty of the perfect life of Christ!

In fact, it is today as it was of old, when the officers were sent to take Him prisoner—they went back without Him, for they said, "Never man spoke like this Man." There is no spot in Him! He is the Lamb of God without blemish, the perfect Christ, and, therefore, we love Him. We love those who possess true excellence and, therefore, we *must* love Christ, for He has every excellence in perfection! If there were no Atonement—if we did not regard our Lord Jesus as our Savior—still every true heart ought to love Him and to be won to Him. There are such charms in His Character that if our souls were not besotted by the love of sin, we must worship and adore this glorious Son of God who is the brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express image of His Person! He is so white and pure that we *ought* to love Him!

Next we come to the blood-shedding—*the sacrificial Character of Christ*. Alas, that this glorious doctrine of the atoning Sacrifice should ever be cast into the background, as it so often is, for the blood-shedding of Christ is the very essence of Christianity! In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ, born of a woman, came into this world as the Substitute for sinners. The vengeance of God against sin was poured out upon Him. He suffered death that those who trust Him might not die—the Lamb of God was slain in their place that He might render satisfaction to the injured honor and broken Law of God. This is the chief reason, after all, why Christ's people love Him—because in His precious blood they see the pardon of all their sins, they see the lifting of themselves up into the life of God—they see the open way of access to the Father, they see the gates of Heaven opened to all Believers!

Beloved, there are some in these days who cry up the glorified Christ and I will cry Him up with them, nor shall they find a word too strong for His praise! Yet they would have men trust in the glorified Christ—they preach the doctrine of the Second Advent as though it were the *chief* teaching of Holy Scripture—and they seem to look to the Second Coming of Christ rather than to the first! But let Paul's words be always our motto, "We preach Christ Crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks, foolishness, but to them which are called, both Jews and

Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." With that same Apostle let us cry, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." His Throne is glorious and His Glory shall speak for itself, but the despised and crucified Christ is the source of the sinner's salvation—and this Truth of God is to be preached and held up as the first and cardinal doctrine of our holy faith!

Brothers and Sisters, let us thus look at Jesus, "white" in His spotless innocence, "ruddy" in His sacrificial suffering. Let us view Him as the one sinless Being and also as the chief of martyrs—the One in whom was no sin—yet upon whom the Lord did cause to meet the iniquity of all His people, with all the suffering it deserved and all the vengeance and wrath of Almighty God that were rightly due to the transgressors! I must not detain you longer upon this part of the subject, but I cannot pass from it without asking the question—Do we all love this precious One in whom there is all excellence and in whom there is also this matchless suffering, this sin-atoning grief? Oh, if your heart is truly set on Christ, you have a portion so rich that you need not envy even the angels, for—

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming Grace and dying love."

If this is your lot, you are happy, thrice happy, though poor, sick and unknown! If Christ is, indeed, your Beloved, you are married to One who is the equal of the Eternal God! If your heart embraces Christ and Christ is really yours, you have more than the world can ever compass! You have more than Heaven, itself, could give if Christ were withdrawn from its courts of Glory. Be happy, then! Be joyous in your Lord! Let your heart go up to Him and rest in Him. And when you come to the Communion Table, let it be with your eyes and your heart fixed on your Beloved, who is "white and ruddy."

But, my dear Hearer, if you have not Christ, oh, how I wish you had Him—and you may have Him this very night! Many of you are strangers to me. At this time of the year, when so many of our regular hearers take their vacation at the seaside, or in the country, there is room for more strangers. Well, dear Friends, we are strangers to one another, but I hope many of you are not strangers to the Master! Or, if you are, possibly the Lord brought you here that you might meet with Him and that He might meet with you. It would be a blessed Sabbath, indeed, to your soul if now you could say, "This perfect Man, I must love Him. This suffering Substitute, I must trust Him. God has laid Him in Zion as a foundation and a chief cornerstone—I will come and build all my hopes for time and for eternity upon Him and His great atoning Sacrifice."

You are black, poor sinner, but then, He is white! And His white shall stand in the place of your black. You are black, but then He is ruddy. And His crimson blood shall wash away every speck and stain of your sin! All you have to do is simply to look to Him by faith, for there is life in a look at Him! Only trust Him, Trembler! Only trust Him, guilty Sinner! Only trust Him and that simple trust shall bring you life, health, perfection, Heaven, God Himself! God grant that it may be!

II. Now, passing on to the remaining words of the text, notice that the spouse says of her Beloved that He is, "the chiefest among ten thousand." These words set forth HIS PERSONAL PRECEDENCE.

"The chiefest among ten thousand." Is it not incorrect to say, "the chiefest"? I care not if it is and I would not like to see the word altered into "chief." Human words, at best, are such poor things that they stagger under the mighty burden of the perfections of Christ! We seem to need some of those huge pillars and pedestals that we sometimes see outside massive piles of architecture, that we may bear up the ponderous Truth of our text! We must have such words as "chiefest," for common language does not suffice in such a case as this! I suppose that, in Heaven, they have done with our poor imperfect speech and know how to speak of Christ as He deserves. Anyhow, we believe with good John Berridge—

"Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

He is the chiefest among ten thousand and it so happens that this word, "chiefest," may mean any one of three or four things. First, take it as it stands—"Chiefest"—that is to say, *Christ is higher, better, lovelier, more excellent, than any who are round about Him.* If you shall bring ten thousand angels, He is the chiefest Angel, the Messenger of the Covenant. If you shall bring ten thousand friends, He is the chiefest Friend, the "Friend that sticks closer than a brother." If you shall bring ten thousand physicians, He is the best Physician, for He heals *all* diseases. If you find ten thousand shepherds, He is the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd. If you find one, two, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, all excellent, they must all give way when He appears, as the stars are forgotten when the sun arises in his strength. Christ is the chiefest, the best, the highest of all beings! Whatever excellences there may be in others, they are all eclipsed by the surpassing excellences that are found in Him!

Christ is the chief among ten thousand; that is to say, *He is the Head, the Ruler, the Prince, the King, the Lord over all.* There He stands, with His feet like most fine gold, and all around Him are the chariots of God that are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, and there is not one who lifts his head as high even as his Lord's feet! And among all the cherubic and seraphic host there is not one who would not count it his highest Heaven to fly at Christ's command to the meanest cottage, or even to a dunghill whereon Lazarus lies with the dogs licking his sores! Christ is King of all the angels and, here below, too, there are ten thousand forces and powers continually at work, for God has His hosts and armaments on earth as well as in Heaven—but Christ is Lord High Admiral of all the seas, the great Commander-in-Chief of all the battalions, the mighty King who rules over all!

And when He comes into His Church, we know that He is Chief there. Who dares look at Him and claim equality with Him? I tremble at the thought of that dreadful blasphemy which might well have condemned England to the lowest Hell for daring to call an earthly monarch, "the head of the Church." It cannot be! It is sheer impiety for man or angel to

ever *dare* to steal that title of Christ! He, alone, is King in the midst of Zion! He is the one and only Head of the Church! It was a brave deed of Cameron and his comrades to lift up their voices against this infamy when first it sought to spread itself in Scotland. And it is ill on our part that we have not lifted up our voices more loudly against it in this, our land! A man or a woman, head of the Church? No, never! Let Christ and Christ, alone, wear the crown He bought with His own blood! He alone is King and let Him always be so proclaimed and acknowledged!

In matters of religion, we need not Caesar's favor and we fear not Caesar's frown. Christ is the one Head of His Church—and His true Church is free from both the control and the patronage of the State—and so she shall be wherever true hearts beat loyally to Christ, and wherever true lips speak His praises! He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." If there are ten thousand bishops, He is the Bishop of souls! If there are ten thousand fathers, He is "the Everlasting Father." If there are ten thousand teachers, yet shall they not be called Rabbis, for One is our Teacher and Rabbi, even Christ! And at His feet the reverent Church adoringly bows, hailing Him, and Him alone, as Head and Master, "the chiefest among ten thousand."

According to the Septuagint, the text has another meaning. Our Lord, in Scripture, is called the Chosen One, the Elect of God. As the Psalmist puts it, speaking by prophecy, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." Christ is chosen out of ten thousand as the Mediator to stand between God and men. Whoever else might have been employed by God for this service—and we are not able to think of any other—yet first of all was Christ chosen of God. And today we may call Him the Chosen One because He *is* the Chosen of His Church. If the question were put to us and a poll were demanded upon it—"Of all the Church of Christ, who shall be Head and Lord? Who shall be Master? Who shall be Teacher? Who shall be the Beloved?"—would not all of us hold up our hands for Him—yes, hands and hearts as well! And we would even lay down our heads on the block if it were necessary to secure His election! Every one of us would, with a burst of acclamation, unconstrained except by His own charms, elect Him to be the Head and Lord in the midst of Zion!

I put to you, dear Hearer, a more personal question—Have *you* chosen Him? If not, will you, by His Grace, put your hand on your heart, now, and say, "Now have I chosen Him because He has first chosen me"? I pray you at once to make a choice of Him, for if you do, you will never regret it. I have stood by a great many deathbeds, but there is one scene I never saw, and never expect to see—and that is a child of God repenting that He ever loved Christ Jesus! May you be able to say what we have often sung!—

"'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."

May Christ be the chosen of your heart! God grant that no soul here may refuse admission to the Prince of Peace!

Lastly, according to the margin of our Bible, the text bears this meaning and probably should be thus read, "*He is the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand.*" The, "ten thousand," we may consider to be the warriors of God enlisted to fight His battles against error and sin. Who is the Standard-Bearer of God's militant host below? The only answer is that, "Christ is the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand." For a standard-bearer, there was need of a select man with good strong arms who could firmly grasp the pole that held aloft the standard—a man resolute of heart, who, having once taken charge of the flag, would sooner die than loose his hold of the colors. It needed for a standard-bearer one who was courageous, one who would not be alarmed by the din and strife of battle and turn his back, but who would go at the head of the host, carrying the banner into the very thick of the fray to lead on the militant band till they had put all their foes to the rout. The standard-bearer should be a stronger man than all the rest of the host, for—

"If the standard-bearer falls,
As fall full well he may,"

what mischief would come to the host and what confusion to this hearts of all the warriors!

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has come into this world and set up a standard because of the Truth of God and well does He handle it, firmly does He grasp it. When on the Cross, the battle thickened round Him—all the hosts of Hell and all the bands of cruel ones on earth sought to strike Him and to seize the Standard—but He bore it still aloft through all the dreadful fray! And this day, though He is now in Heaven, yet by His blessed Spirit that Standard is still unfurled to the breeze. In the order of His Providence, it seems to me that Christ is always bearing that Standard a little farther and a little farther on—and if Christians would but keep nearer to Christ and be more like He is, the victories of His Church would be daily fresh and new!

We should soon see this world conquered for Christ if we kept step with the Divine Standard-Bearer. He is bearing that Standard in front of some of you into that alley at the back of the house where you live—dare you follow Him and go and win some spoil for Him? Christ's banner is uplifted in many parts of London tonight—dare you follow it? Dare you stand in the streets and in the by-ways to tell of Heaven's accomplished salvation, and of Christ's finished work that saves from death and Hell? The nations of the earth need the Gospel! Christ is opening the gates of brass to our missionaries—are there no young men here who will follow Christ's banner as it gleams afar? Have I no young John Williams here? Is there no young man here who will be a Robert Moffat or a William Knibb? There is the Standard-Bearer—Christ is not in the background! Oh, why should we be so slow to follow Him? We are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves! God give us to be worthy followers of so glorious a Standard-Bearer as Christ Jesus our Lord!

Lift up your eyes to Heaven and see Him, there, bearing the Standard at the right hand of God! The troops are marshalling! The bugle sounds

for some of us! Gray-heads, are you ready? Young men and maidens, are you ready? If the trumpet sounds in your ears tonight, are you ready to rally round that Standard and to sing the praises of Him who has called you? He is coming soon and then, when the Standard-Bearer is here, shall we have a share in His triumph? Shall we rise to shame and confusion of face, or shall we rise to participate in the splendor of His universal reign? God grant that we may all love and trust the Divine Standard-Bearer and that we may all be found among His faithful soldiers forevermore!

The Lord be with you, Beloved, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 61.

Verse 1. *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me.* You know who it is that speaks these words, our Lord Jesus, Himself.

1, 2. *Because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.* The Divine Messiah comes to usher in the true Jubilee—the blessed day in which the poor shall have the Gospel preached to them and in which the broken-hearted shall find their brokenness healed. He comes to bring the captive ones back from the Babylon of sin and to deliver from prison all those who, because of their transgressions, are bound with fetters. In a word, He comes to proclaim that now is the accepted time, now is the day of Grace, now is the year of Jubilee. As for the adversaries of His people, to them it shall be "the day of vengeance of our God," for the Lord will deal out to them, measure for measure, as they have dealt to His oppressed and persecuted people.

3. *To appoint to them that mourn in Zion, to give to them beauty*—Or, "a coronet"—

3. *For ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified.* When Jesus comes, He brings all things with Him, for He is all things to His people and they find their all in Him. There is no sorrow at His coming to those who receive Him—it is gladness—gladness repeated and gladness multiplied. Not only does joy come in one form, but in many, as the verses of this chapter so sweetly remind us! And that which comes is permanent, making those that receive it to be like long-standing trees, for they shall outlive their sorrows and prove that they were planted by God for His own Glory.

4. *And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.* Truly, God's living Church today shall do all this! The Jewish Church became a waste and God's Glory seemed to be trodden under the foot of His foes, but the true children of the promise—they who are counted for the seed, even as many as believe, who are thus the seed of

believing Abraham—shall build up all these wastes and happy shall they be in such joyous service!

5, 6. *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves.* Because of the sin of His people, the aliens and the foreigners trample upon them. But if you and I are truly of the holy seed, having living faith in Christ, we shall look upon the whole race of men as enduring all their care and toil on our behalf. They shall be our plowmen and our vinedressers, but we shall be the ministers of God, the priests of the Lord, making use of every new invention—traveling by steam, speaking by telephone—using everything for God's Glory, letting men invent all they can and we, ourselves, turning all things to account for the honor and Glory of our God. I know that there is another fulfillment of this test for God's ancient people, but this is also a fulfillment of it to us who are His spiritual people, His real children, born according to the promise.

7. *For your shame you shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion.* That is a sweet state of heart for any of us to be in—to rejoice in our portion! Oh, what a wonderful portion we have to rejoice in! How blessed is the lot of God's chosen people! However small a part of our portion may be visible to the eyes here below, yet we can sing—

"All things are ours, the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood!
While the good Spirit shows us how
To use and to improve them too."

Instead of confusion such as once was the lot of the righteous, "they shall rejoice in their portion."

7. *Therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be to them.* Here is another choice expression—"everlasting joy." Theirs is not a transient joy like the mirth of fools, which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, but, "everlasting joy shall be to them."

8. *For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burned offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.* That is why they have everlasting joy. There would be no everlasting joy if it were not for the Everlasting Covenant! Those gentlemen who want to cut that word, "everlasting," out of our Bibles will find that it will be a very long while before we shall agree to be rid of it! No, we shall *never* consent to give it up! We shall always rejoice that we have God's *everlasting* love and an *Everlasting* Covenant and, therefore, that we shall have *everlasting* joy!

9. *And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles.* They shall be discerned and distinguished. Just as surely as you may know a Jew anywhere in the world, today, so shall men know the people of God. Though they wear no peculiar garb, yet their speech shall betray them. There shall be a something about them which shall bear testimony to the fact that "they are the seed which the Lord has blessed." "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles."—

9, 10. *And their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice*—Not a little, for He is a great God, so, "I will greatly rejoice" in Him. "The Lord has done great things for us." Let us, therefore, greatly rejoice in Him. "I will greatly rejoice"—

10. *In the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.* Not only shall my lips be full of joy, but my inmost nature, the very essence of my being—"my soul shall be joyful in my God." "In my God." That is a stage higher than saying, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord." We do greatly rejoice in the Lord, but our very *soul* is joyful when we can, each one, call Him, "*my* God." That is a possession that the richest among you may well envy if you do not have it.

10. *For He has clothed me with the garment of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* The loveliest sight in the world is one of God's people. We sometimes sing, and sadly sing, concerning this earth—

"Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

But there is another side to that picture, for when the "man" is a true child of God, we can say—

"Though every prospect pleases,
Yet man outshines them all!"

Well did the Psalmist sing, "You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor." Angels do homage to the renewed man, for the promise is, "They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." You who are children of God need not wish to change places, even, with an archangel, for you are brother to Him who sits upon the Throne of God! You wear a nature that is akin to that of the Only-Begotten! Indeed, it is the same nature as His! Glory, then, in this great Truth of God—that you are covered with the robe of righteousness, decked with ornaments like a bridegroom, and adorned with jewels like a bride!

11. *For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.* They are sown in the earth at present, but, as the seeds come up in the springtime beneath the genial showers and the shining of the sun, so righteousness and praise shall, in due time, come up in a golden harvest on every hill and valley of this poor sinful world! Hasten it, O Lord, hasten it in Your own good time! Amen.

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

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

SPICES, FLOWERS, LILIES AND MYRRH
NO. 2479

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 23, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1880.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh."
Song of Solomon 5:13.

IN this chapter the spouse describes in detail the Person of her Beloved. She is not satisfied with saying, "He is altogether lovely," but she delights to talk of the charms of each part of His sacred Person and to picture the beauties of His Divine form and features, so that thereby she may, perhaps, win some other heart, first to admire and then to love Him.

Dear Friends, there are some things about which you will be wise not to go into details. You had better speak in general terms of half the things on earth, for if you once describe them in detail, you will have to confess that they are marred by a thousand imperfections! You may be content to give merely a surface glance at them, for if you dive beneath the surface, you will soon discover much that will alter your opinion of the thing that, at first sight, looked so lovely. But it is not so with Jesus, our Well-Beloved! You may talk of Him as long as you please and praise Him as much as you can, yet you will never discover that you have exaggerated His excellences. You may go into detail about Him and dwell with much minuteness upon everything relating to His Character, His offices, His Words, His deeds and you shall be made to wonder at the perfection of each one of them. You may apply the microscope to Christ. You may examine His little things, if, indeed, anything can be little that refers to Him. You may look into the deep things of Christ, the hidden things of Christ, His secrets—and the more closely you look, the more you will be amazed, astonished and filled with delight!

It is of Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom, that we perceive the spouse to be speaking and mentioning in detail at least 10 particulars, dwelling with delight upon the beauties of His head and His locks, His eyes and His cheeks, His lips and His hands and every part of Him. And, Beloved Friends, I think it shows true love to Christ when we want to speak at length upon everything that concerns Him. The general Hearer says, "Oh, yes, yes! Of course, Christ is the Son of God and He is also perfect Man—I believe that." But he does not want you to go into minute particulars concerning your Lord. It is not so with those who truly love the Savior—they wish to know all that can be known about Him. True love likes to

become familiar with the object of its affection—its heart is set upon that object. It studies it and can never know it too well or too closely. True love to Christ thinks of Him from morning till night. It is glad to be released from other thoughts that it may follow only its one darling pursuit. True love to Christ seeks to get to Him, to live with Him, to live upon Him and thus to know Him so intimately that things which were unobserved and passed over at the first, stand out in clear light to the increased joy and delight of the contemplative mind! I wish, dear Friends, that we had many more of those people who study Christ from head to foot that they may learn all that can be learned about Him—those who would be able, with the spouse, to talk of His charms and beauties in detail—and to describe them as she does with rapturous delight!

You know how very unacquainted many people are with the Song of Solomon—they shut up this Book of Canticles in despair and say that they cannot understand its meaning. You will find that it is just the same with every truly spiritual thing! If you put into the hands of any one of them a deeply spiritual book, he will say, "I cannot comprehend what the writer means. The man seems to be in a rapture and I cannot make out what he is aiming at by such writing." Just so. Unspiritual people are all at sea in spiritual things and even some of God's children, who know Christ so as to be saved by Him, seem to be altogether out of their depth when you begin to speak of the things which you have made touching the King, or dilate upon those special Truths of God which only experience and fellowship with Christ can reveal to the soul. In speaking upon our text, I am sure that I shall not say *too much* in praise of my Lord and Master! My fear is that I shall not say a thousandth part as much as He deserves—and yet, perhaps, it shall seem but trivial talk to some who as yet do not know that one hair of His head is worth more than the whole world and that one drop of His precious blood has an eternal efficacy about it. On the other hand, I know that I shall not speak too enthusiastically for those whose hearts are warm with love to Christ. May the Lord, in great mercy, make us all to have such hearts, and He shall have all the praise!

There are two things I shall speak of as I may be helped by the Holy Spirit. First, *Christ looked upon is very lovely*— "His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." Secondly, *Christ listened to is very precious*— "His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." There is an important distinction between the two heads of my discourse that I want you to notice before I proceed further, for there is a considerable difference between Christ looked upon and Christ listened to. There are some who listen to Christ's Gospel and they do well. But those who also look with eyes of love upon His sacred Person. Those who contemplate not only what He says but what He *is.* Those who delight to know not only what He taught but what He is who taught it—these are they who have penetrated yet further into the mysteries of Christ.

I. With these we begin as we consider our first point—CHRIST LOOKED UPON IS VERY LOVELY. Note that these saints first see their

Lord's loveliness and then they say concerning Him, "His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." But why do they mention His cheeks?

I suppose, first, because *every part of Christ is inexpressibly delightful.* Take any portion of His Countenance that you may and it has surpassing beauty about it. The spouse had already spoken about her Beloved's head, locks and eyes—now she mentions His cheeks. Any sight of Christ is delightful—a single passing glimpse of Him is a foretaste of Heaven, the beginning of Paradise! Though you see but little of Christ, yet if it is Christ whom you really see, that sight will save you! Though you see Christ, as it were, with but one eye, and though that eye is dim, and though that dim eye is filled with tears, yet if you do but *see* Him at all, that sight will save you—and just in proportion as you are able to see Him, your delight will increase! A sight of Him in *any* capacity and under any form has great richness of sweetness in it.

Think for a moment what is meant by a sight of, "His cheeks. Though you may not yet see the majesty of His brow as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Though you may not perceive the brightness of the lightning flashes of His eyes, which are as a flame of fire. Though you may scarcely be able to imagine, at present, what will be the Glory of His Second Advent—yet if you can but see the cheeks that He gave to the smiters—if you do but know something of Him as the suffering Savior, you shall find that there is inexpressible delight in Him and, with the spouse, you will say, "His cheeks are as a bed of spices." To a believing soul, then, there is great delight in every part of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, I think the saints see *great loveliness in those parts of Christ which have been most despised.* Just now I mentioned the cheek as one of those parts of Christ's blessed body that were exposed to special shame, as Isaiah foretold, using, by Inspiration, the very words of the Messiah in His agony—"I gave My back to the smiters and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Oh, if we could but see Him, now! If we could but gaze upon His face as it is in Glory, what a subject of meditation it would be to think that ever the spit of cruel mockers did run down those blessed cheeks—that infinite loveliness was insulted with inconceivable contempt—the holy face of the Incarnate Son of God distained with the accursed spit of brutal men! [See sermon #*2473, Volume 42—"An Awful Contrast"*—read/download at http://www.spurgeongems.org] O my Soul, how low your Lord has stooped! Can you really believe it possible that it should have been so? Yes, you know that it was so, yet, is it not sad to think that His dear face, which is as the sun shining in his strength, which is, indeed, the very Heaven of heavens, the light of the Temple of God above—is it not sad to think that His face should have been spit upon for your sake and because of your sin and your iniquity? Alas, that each of us had a part in that shameful deed—

"My Jesus! Who with spittle vile
Profaned Your sacred brow?
Or whose unpitying scourge has made
Your precious blood to flow?

'Tis I have thus ungrateful been
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Your sweet mercy's sake!"

"It was I, with my vain and idle talk, with my false and proud speech, that did spit into that dear face." How sad that He should ever have been made to suffer so! O glorious love, that He should be willing, even, to stoop to this terrible depth of ignominy that He might lift us up to dwell with Him on high! So, I say again, every part of Christ is lovely, but that which has been most despised and most subjected to suffering and shame for us is the peculiar subject of our delightful contemplation.

And next, my Brothers and Sisters, *those parts of Christ in which we do not immediately see any special office or use* are, nevertheless, peculiarly lovely to the saints. I can gaze by faith on the brow of Him who plans for me and admire His infinite wisdom. I can think of the eyes of Him who looks in love upon me and bless Him for His care. I can praise the lips that speak for me in Heaven and that speak to me upon earth—and I can bless the matchless eloquence that never ceases to plead for me and with me. But as for the cheeks of Christ, what do they do for me? What peculiar function have they to perform? I fear that we are all too apt to ask concerning Christ, "How is this to work for our advantage and how is that to turn out for our profit?" Has it come to this—that we are never to love Christ except when we see that we are profited by Him? If there is an abstruse doctrine, as we think it, that does not appear to have a practical outlook, are we, therefore, never to speak of it? If we cannot see that we derive comfort, or profit, or sanctification from some teaching which may be high, mysterious, sublime, so that we do not see whereunto it tends, yet, Beloved, are we to refuse to think of it?

Until the question, "*Cui bono?"* shall have been answered, will we seal up that sacred page and never read it? Do you care only for the lips that speak to you? Have you no love for the cheeks that are silent? Do you care for nothing but for the eyes that are watching over you? If there comes to you nothing from those cheeks of your Lord, yet shall they not be to you, "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers"? The fact is, we are not to judge concerning Christ in any such fashion as this. On the contrary, if there is any duty which Christ has commanded, but which, instead of seeming to be easy and profitable to us, is hard and requires that we should give so much that Judas will cry out, "To what purpose is this waste?" let us never mind him, but break our alabaster boxes and pour out the sweet perfume upon our dear Master! Let the cheeks that seem to have no special office to fulfill—let that part of Christ or of Christianity that seems to serve no end that we can see—be, nevertheless, precious to us! These are *His* cheeks, therefore are they precious to me! This duty is a command from *Him*, therefore I must perform it! And this doctrine, of which I do not see the practical end, is, nevertheless, a doctrine of His teaching—therefore I accept it with delight!

But further, Beloved children of God, the followers of Christ have an intense admiration, an almost infinite love for *that part of Christ by which*

they are able to commune with Him and, perhaps, that is one reason why His cheeks are here mentioned. The cheek is the place of fellowship where we exchange tokens of love. What a blessing it is that Christ should have had a cheek for the lips of love to approach and to kiss! What a privilege it is that it always should be possible for a loving heart to express its affection to Christ! If He had accepted us and then put us right away from Him and said, "There, you may love Me, but you must never tell Me of it." If we were conscious that when we did talk of our love to Christ, He never knew it, for He was far away and high above us—and did not care for such poor love as ours—in such a case He would not be half such a Christ as He now is to us. If He had taken Himself away to the ivory palaces and had shut the door and if, when we tried to gaze up at Him, He only looked down upon us with His countenance "as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars," but never stooped to where we were, that He might commune with us, and that we might tell Him the story of our love—He would not be half as sweet to us as He is now!

Many of you know what it is to pray right into His very ear in the time of your sorrow and you also know what it is to speak right into His ear in the hour of your joy! And, sometimes, when you have been alone with Him (now I am talking of the deep things of Christ, of the pearls which are not to be cast before swine)—you know that He has heard what you have said to Him. You have been as certainly assured that He has been listening to your declaration as if, like Peter, you had heard Him ask, "Do you love Me?" and you had answered, "Lord, You know all things; you know that I love You." And you have been delighted with the thought that He *did* know that you loved Him and that you might tell Him that it was so! You also rejoiced that you could go forth into the world and do something that He would see you do, something that you did not do for the sake of the Church, much less for your own sake, but which you did all for Him, just as you would give Him the kisses of love upon His own cheeks, which are, "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." Those of you who have been in communion with Christ know what I mean and you know that anything by which you come into close contact with Christ is very, very delightful to you.

How greatly we rejoice to think of Christ's Humanity because we feel that it brings Him very near to us! He is our Brother! He feels what we feel and through His Humanity this wondrous Man is next of kin to us! He who is truly God is also our near Kinsman, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! How the blessed doctrine of the union of the saints with Christ delights us as we remember that "we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones"! How the wondrous Truth of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit charms us because the same Spirit that rested upon Him also rests upon us! And the holy oil that was first poured upon Him, who is the Head, descends even to us who are as the hem of the garment that reaches to the ground! It is the same Spirit that is upon Him that is upon us and so, again, we are one with Him. Does not this Truth of God also make prayer very sweet as the means of getting to

Christ? And does it not make praise very sweet as another means of communicating with Christ? And oh, though some put the sacred Table of the Lord out of its proper place, yet to the communion of the body of Christ, it is a dear and blessed ordinance! Often do we know Him in the breaking of bread when we have not recognized Him, even though He has talked with us by the way. So, you see, the saints delight in those Truths concerning Christ which enable them to have fellowship with Him and thus they realize what the spouse meant when she said, "His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers."

I have thus tried to show you that the saints see great beauty in Christ when they look upon Him. But now I have to remind you that saints also labor to tell others of the loveliness of Christ when they look upon Him. In this blessed service, however, they must, in part, labor in vain, for, as we have often sung—

"Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

I suppose that even he who has seen Christ in Heaven could not fully tell us of His beauties. Paul has not told us much of what He heard in Paradise, though he told all he could tell after he had been caught up to the third Heaven. He "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter." Oh, how one longs for but a moment's sight of Christ in Glory! One might be content to have only a dry crust and to lie in an underground dungeon for the rest of one's life, if one might but gaze on His blessed face, for once, and hear Him say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Perhaps you think you would have a deal to tell if that were your blessed experience, but, Beloved, you might not have *anything* to tell—you would only feel less able to speak than you ever were before! You would be so dazzled, so astonished, so amazed at the Glory of Christ that, perhaps, you might never be able to speak at all!

The spouse, however, in our text tries to speak of the loveliness of Christ by comparisons. She cannot do it with one emblem—she must have two concerning His cheeks—they are "as a bed of spices," "as sweet flowers."

Notice, in the metaphors used by the spouse, that there is *a blending of sweetness and beauty*—"as a bed of spices"—there is *sweetness*. And then, "as sweet flowers"—there is *beauty*. There is sweetness to the nostrils and beauty to the eyes—spice for its fragrance and flowers for their loveliness. In Christ there is something for every spiritual sense and for every spiritual sense there is a complete satisfaction and delight in Him. Look at Him and He is to your sight as sweet flowers! Get a spiritual taste of Him and then He is as honey and the honeycomb! Take, as it were, a spiritual smell of Him and you shall find that He is "as a bed of spices." Touch Him, or hear Him and it shall be just the same—you shall find the daintiest, the highest, the most harmonious feelings your spirit ever knew when you do but approach Him with any spiritual sense in full exercise. Our blessed Master may be viewed from every side and yet He is perfect from every aspect. We have seen Him far above us. There are few

things that look well when set up aloft and gazed at from below—but He does. We shall one day see Him side by side and I guarantee you that we shall count Him lovely, then, even as we reckon Him lovely now! Angels have looked down upon Him from above, gazing on Him when He was here on earth, and He was infinitely lovely to their vision. Seen by daylight or by moonlight, seen in the crowd or seen in solitude, seen in our days of sorrow or seen in our times of joy, our Lord Jesus possesses all kinds of loveliness compacted into one perfect loveliness—all perfections blended to make one perfection—every sweet concocted and distilled to make one perfect sweetness. Well, therefore, may His spouse pile up the metaphors and blend sweet spices with fragrant flowers in trying to describe His charms!

Notice that when the spouse is speaking of the cheeks of her Beloved, she brings in the idea of *abundance*—spices, yes, "a *bed* of spices." Flowers—not one or two, but, according to the Hebrew, "towers of perfume," which I understand to mean those raised beds which we delight to have in our gardens, where there are many flowers set in order, forming charming banks of beauty. No doubt Solomon had some of those in his garden, for, "there is nothing new under the sun." And those raised beds of dainty flowers are fit emblems of the beauteous cheeks of Christ, with their delicate tints of white and red. So in Christ there is infinite abundance.

There is also in Christ infinite *variety*. There is in Him all you can need of any one thing and there is more than all you can need of everything! There is all that your soul could take in of any one thing and more than your soul could take in if it were multiplied a million times and could take in a million precious things at once! There is all you ever have needed and all you ever will need. Did I say, "need"? There is in Christ all you can *desire*, for that is one of His names, "He Is All Desires." When you get to Heaven and have a larger heart than you at present possess. When your soul shall be spacious as the sea. If it could be vast as the universe itself, still He would be able to fill it and still to be, Himself, overflowing with blessing! There is abundance in Him and there is variety. Oh, what a Christ He is! "As a bed of spices, and as sweet flowers."

The spouse's metaphors seem to me, also, to suggest *use and delight.* She speaks of spices, for which there is practical use in surgery and in medicine, for preservation and for perfume. And she also mentions sweet flowers, for which there may not be any particular use, but which are charming for ornament and for the delectation of taste. So, dear Friends, in Christ Jesus there is all that we need, but there is a great deal more! There is something beside and beyond our actual necessities—there are many spiritual luxuries. I like, at the Lord's Table, to think to myself, "Here is bread, that is the staff of life, but what is that in the cup? Wine! Ah, why not water? Here is more than I need, for I can live without wine but the Lord says that I shall not do so. He will not only give His people the best things, but the best of the best! When our Lord keeps house, He does not allow us just so many ounces of bread and so many ounces of

meat, as they do in the workhouse, but He says, "Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." The Bridegroom cries, "Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!" And He does not merely bring out wine, but you know how it is described—"wines on the less well-refined." Christianity is not the bond slave's starvation allowance that some people make it out to be—duty, doing and serving to win Christ and to keep up your position—and I know not what besides. It is heirship with Christ, the possession in Him of everything and the privilege of living up to our royal income—oh that we could attain to that high style of living! "All things are yours." Then claim them as your own! God has given you His dear Son and He has given you Himself, for He has said, "I will be their God." Then live with the joy that a man ought to have who has Jehovah to be his God and Jesus Christ to be his Savior! The Lord has given us *everything*—then let us live at the rate of joy that a man ought to have who possesses everything! God bring us to that happy state!

"His cheeks"—those features of the Beloved which do not, at first, seem likely to yield us anything—"are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers," inexpressibly precious, yielding to us both what we need and what shall delight and overflow our souls. You see, Beloved, what saints think of Christ—let each one of us ask himself and herself, "Do I think thus of Him? Do I thus admire Him? Is He everything to me?" These are sure marks of a true Christian, that he loves his Master and praises Him. There is many a poor child of God who is half afraid that he is not in the number of God's people, but he says, "I love Jesus. Oh, I would do anything to glorify Him." My dear Friend, do not ever get the idea that you love Him without His loving you! You may be quite sure that the reason why you love Him is because He first loved you. And if you love Him very much, you may rest assured that He loves you a great deal more! If you have but a spark of love to Him in your heart, He has a furnace of love to you in His heart! If your love to Him is but as a single grain, His love to you is abundant as the richest harvest! His love to you is as much above your love to Him as the heavens are higher than the earth!

Oh, that we did but think more highly of Christ! Perhaps it may help us to do so if we consider how worthy He is of that love and how wondrously His thoughts of us exceed our thoughts of Him. I sometimes feel very sad when I think about some who profess to be the Lord's people. Ah, me, there are many who, I hope, may prove to be His people, but they do not reflect much credit on Him. Some of God's children are a very strange lot—if we had such sons and daughters as God has, some of us would never be able to bear with them at all—we would be impatient with them and turn them out of doors to get on as best they could by themselves. When you get sick, sad and weary of God's people, turn your thoughts to God, Himself, and if ever you see any spots in the Church, Christ's bride, look at her glorious Husband and you will only love Him the more as you think of His wondrous condescension in having loved such a poor thing as His Church is, even at her best!

Think how bright He is, how glorious, how surpassing are His charms that they can be seen even through the defects and imperfections of His redeemed ones! We may well marvel that ever such love as His could have been lavished upon such unworthy beings as His people are. Do not get depressed and distressed, dear Friends, because of your own imperfections, or the imperfections of others! Or if you do, quickly rise again to fight against sin under the blessed conviction that there are no imperfections in Him—that He is altogether lovely, altogether sweet—and that the day must come when we, who are one with Him even now, shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is. Complete sanctification will be the lot of every redeemed soul! If we have known the Lord and have already had something of His likeness, we shall go on to know Him till we are perfect in that likeness. Let that blessed consummation be the subject of our constant prayer and our confident expectation.

II. Now, secondly, and but briefly, let us turn to the other part of our text—"His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." These words teach us that CHRIST LISTENED TO IS VERY PRECIOUS. When He is silent, and we only look at Him, He is lovely to our eyes. But when He speaks, we can see "His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh."

Notice, first, that it is well, whenever we hear the voice of Jesus Christ, *to try to see the blessed Person who is speaking.* The Gospel is very precious to those of us who know its power, but, beyond all question, Christ Himself is even more precious than His Gospel. It is delightful to read any promise of the Scriptures, but it is more delightful to come into communion with the faithful Promiser. The time when I can most enjoy a promise from the Word of God is when it seems to me as if it must have been written only yesterday—on purpose to meet my case—or as if I could see the eternal pen writing every one of the strokes and making them all for me! Whenever you hear one of the Lord's promises, think of the Divine lips that spoke it and you will love the promise all the better because you have thought of the lips that uttered it. The spouse does not say in our text, "His Words are sweet," but she speaks of, "His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." Why should we not believe more in a personal Christ and why should we not always see the connection between the mercy and the hand that gives it, and between the promise and the lips that speak it?

Some of you may remember William Huntington's story that I have sometimes quoted to you about an old farmer, who, when one of his daughters was married, gave her a thousand pounds as a wedding present. There was another daughter and her father did not give *her* a thousand pounds when she was married, but he gave her something as a wedding present and then he kept on, pretty nearly every day in the week, sending her what he called "the hand-basket portion, with father's love." And so in the long run she received a great deal more than her sister did! It was not given all at the same time and then done with—but it kept on coming—now a sack of flour, and then this, and that, and the other, always, "with father's love." And so she had far more than the

thousand pounds and she also had far more of his love. I like, when I get a mercy, to have it come to me with my Heavenly Father's love. Just my daily portion as I need it—not given all in a lump, so that I might go away with it into a far country, as we are sure to do if we have all our mercy at once—but given day by day, as the manna fell, with our Heavenly Father's love every time—a fresh token of Infinite Grace and Infinite Love! So, you see, the mercy leads you to think of the hand that gives it and of the Father who sends it, as in the text it is not the *words* of the Beloved, but *His lips* which the spouse says are "like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh."

Notice the comparison in the text—lilies—not white lilies, of course, but red lilies, crimson lilies, lilies of such a color as are frequently to be seen which would be a suitable emblem of the Beloved's lips. Christ's lips are peculiarly delightful to us, for *it is with them that He speaks to us and intercedes with the Father for us.* When He pleads as the Intercessor on behalf of a poor soul like me, His lips are, indeed, in God's sight, like lovely lilies. The Father looks at His dear Son's lips and He is charmed with them and blesses us because of Christ's intercession. And whenever Christ turns round, and speaks to us, shall we not listen at once, with eyes and ears wide open, as we say, "I like to watch His lips as He is speaking, for His lips are to me as lilies"?

I suppose this comparison means that Christ's lips are very pure, as the lily is the purest of flowers, and that they are very gentle, for we always associate the lily with everything that is tender, soft and kind. There is not a thorn about it as there is with the rose. We speak not of it as Herbert did of the rose—

"Whose hue, angry and brave,
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eyes."

It is not so. The lily is all tenderness and is without a thorn, though often it may be found growing among thorns. The lily is also inconceivably beautiful and so is Christ in speaking to His people. "Never man spoke like this Man." The very words of Christ are the loftiest poetry and the sweetest music! Though they sometimes make us weep, great joy lies deeply hidden beneath the grief He causes to our spirits. "His lips are like lilies."

But, dear Friends, the spouse's comparison fails, for she said, "His lips, like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." Lilies do not do this, but Christ does! He is more than a lily, or He is a lily of such a sort as never bloomed on earth except once! He was the only lily that ever dropped sweet-smelling myrrh! The spouse says that His lips do that—what does this mean? Does it not mean that His Word is often full of a very sweet, mysterious, blessed influence? You have come here often and it is not because I have spoken that there has been a blessing to your souls. When I have set forth Christ to you—and I have no other theme but Christ—there have often come to you mysterious droppings. You have had singular feelings in your spirit caused by the secret oozing of the Word of God, the flowing out from the Word, and flowing in into your

spirit, causing you to say, "What a change has come over me! I went into God's House very heavy, but I came away quite relieved. I went in there perplexed and worried, but I came away knowing clearly what I ought to do. I went in there cold and chilly, and feeling myself at a distance from God, but I came out ready to dance with the sense of His realized Presence!" Ah, that change has been caused by some of the sweet-smelling myrrh that has dropped from the lips of Christ!

There are many people who meet with us on the Sabbath who do not care to come out to the week-night services. I take the week-night attendance as somewhat of a test of piety—any hypocrite will come out on a Sunday, but it is not every hypocrite who will come out on a Thursday night, though some do, I dare say! But still, the most of them are for a Sunday religion only—a week-day religion they do not need. That is to say, they will feed on the Word after a fashion and worship God after a fashion, when most other people do! But give *me* that religion that loves to creep out on a week-night and is willing to take a back seat if it may but get a bit of spiritual food! Give me that man who says, "My soul must be fed. I have been tearing about all this week, almost worn out with fatigue and perplexed with a great many cares—it is a delightful thing to be able to get into the House of Prayer to hear about Christ and to feed on Him." Oh, you who eat your morsels in secret behind the door, I believe more in you than in those who sit openly at the table, but who never have a secret feast at all!

"Oh, but!" says one, "I do not hear the Word to profit." No, of course you do not! You see, you are looking to the lips of a *man.* But if you look to the lips of the Master, you will find that "His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." You may have heard the story of the lady who was present when Mr. Ebenezer Erskine preached at a Scotch Communion Service. She thought she had never heard such a man in all her life! He preached Christ so sweetly that she was charmed. She enquired where he was to preach the next Sabbath and she left her own place of worship to go to hear Mr. Erskine again. But it was a dreadfully dry discourse, she said, and she was foolish enough to go into the vestry and say to the preacher, "My dear Sir, I have been bitterly disappointed in hearing you this morning. I heard you last Sabbath and you so extolled Christ that I enjoyed the service above measure. So I thought I would come again to hear you, but now I have got nothing." "No, Madam," replied the good man, "last Sabbath you went to worship God and to feed on Christ, so you received the blessing you sought. Today, you came to hear Mr. Erskine, and you have heard me, but you have missed the blessing."

Oh, dear Friends, beware of going to places of worship merely to hear men! Of course you must hear a man speaking, but go with this view—that those lips which are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, should be the lips to which you really are listening! Be praying all the time, "Lord, speak to me through the minister. Speak to me through the hymn. Speak to me through the prayer, speak to me through any part of the

service—yes, speak through the speaker's not speaking if You will—only speak to me! Let those dear lips of Yours drop sweet-smelling myrrh into my soul!" Pray thus and you shall not be disappointed, you can be sure of that.

This blessing is what you and I must seek after day by day, for we need this myrrh for the healing of the wounds that sin has made. We need this myrrh in our spiritual worship that we may offer it up to God. We need this myrrh to perfume us and make our lives fragrant in the midst of our daily cares. We need this myrrh to kill the contagion that abounds in this wicked world—and we shall get it through the Word of God when it comes fresh from the lips of Christ! O God, bring us all into this blessed state!

I close by saying that if there are any here present who do not prize the Word of God, who have no care to listen to the lips of Christ, I pray God that they may speedily be converted, for if they are not, they shall hear Him speak when His lips shall not be as lilies, but as a flaming fire! And His Word that shall be spoken, then, shall burn as an oven, and His enemies shall be consumed thereby! God give Grace to such as have not believed in Jesus to look to Him and listen to Him now! "Incline your ears," He says, "and come to Me: hear, and your soul shall live." Yes, He says, "Look to Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." May God give His blessing to these words, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—785, 970, 426.

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

THE TENDER GRAPES
NO. 2480

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 30, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1880.

"The vines with the tender grape give a good smell."
Song of Solomon 2:13.

THE vine is of all trees the most useless unless it bears fruit. You cannot make hardly anything of it. You would scarcely be able to cut enough wood out of a vine to hang a pot upon. You cannot turn it into furniture and barely could you use it in the least degree for building purposes. It must either bear fruit, or else it must be consumed in the fire. The branches of the vine that bear no fruit are necessarily cut off and they are used, as I have seen them used in the South of France many a time, in little twisted bundles for kindling the fire. They burn very rapidly, so there is soon an end of them and then they are gone.

The vine is constantly used, in Scripture, as a picture of the nominal Church of Christ, so, like the vine, we must either bring forth fruit or we shall be accounted as good for nothing. Dear Friends, we *must* serve God! We must bring forth, from our very soul, love to God and service to Him as the fruit of our renewed nature, or else we are useless, worthless, shall only abide our time and then we shall be cut down to be burned. Our end must be destruction if our life is not fruitful. This gives a very solemn importance to our lives and it should make each of us seriously ask, "Am I bringing forth fruit to God? Have I brought forth fruits meet for repentance? For if not, I must, by-and-by, feel the keen edge of the Vinedresser's knife and I shall be taken away from any sort of union that I now have with the Church which is Christ's vine—and be flung over the wall as a useless thing whose end is to be burned."

Beloved, you all know that there is no possibility of bringing forth any fruit unless we are in Christ and unless we abide in Christ. We must bear fruit, or we shall certainly perish—and we cannot have fruit unless we have Christ. We must be knit to Christ, vitally one with Him, just as a branch is really, after a living fashion, one with the stem! It would be no use to tie a branch to the stem of the vine—that would not cause it to bring forth fruit. It must be joined to it in a living union and so must you and I be livingly joined to Christ! Do you know, by experience, what that expression means? For, if you do not know it by experience, you do not know it at all! No man knows what life is but the one who is alive. And no man knows what union to Christ is but he who is united to Christ. We must become one with Christ by an act of faith. We must be inserted into Him as the graft is placed in the incision made in the tree into which it is to be grafted. Then there must be a knitting of the two together, a vital

junction, a union of life and a flowing of the sap, or else there cannot be any bearing of fruit. Again, I say, what a serious thing this makes our life to be! How earnest should be our questioning of ourselves! "For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart." And so may there be about this matter. Let each one of us ask, "Am I bearing fruit? I am not unless I am *vitally united to Christ*. I have openly professed that I am in Christ, but am I bringing forth fruit to His honor and glory?"

I think I hear someone say, "I *hope* I have begun to bring forth some fruit, but it is very little in quantity and it is of very poor quality. And I do not suppose that the Lord Jesus will hardly stoop to notice it." Well, now, listen to what the text says! It is the Heavenly Bridegroom, it is Christ, Himself, who, in this Song, speaks to His spouse and bids her come into the vineyard and look about her. For, says He, "The vines with the tender grape give a good smell." So, you see, there *was* some fruit, though it could only be spoken of as, "the tender grape." Some read the passage, "The vines in blossom give forth fragrance." Others think it refers to the grape just as it begins to form. It was a poor little thing, but the Lord of the vineyard was the first to spy it out and if there is any little fruit to God upon anyone here present, our Lord Jesus Christ can see it! Though the berry is scarcely formed. Though it is only like a flower which has just begun to knit, He can see the fruit and He delights in that fruit.

I want, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, to speak about those early fruits—those tender grapes—that are being brought forth by some who have but lately come to know the Lord. And first we will enquire, *what are these tender grapes?* Secondly, *what is the Lord's estimate of them?* And thirdly, *what is the danger to these tender grapes?* You will learn what that is from the 15th verse—"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes."

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THESE TENDER GRAPES? What are these first-fruits of the Spirit of God of which our text says, "The vines with the tender grape give a good smell"? While I am preaching, I shall be going over my own experience and the experience of many of God's people. And though I shall not be especially speaking to *them*, it will do them good to remember what they passed through in the early days of their Christian life.

One of the first tender grapes that we spy out on living branches of the True Vine is *a secret mourning for sin* and, very often, an *open* mourning, too. The man is no longer the mirthful, jovial, light-headed, dare-devil sort of fellow that he was. He has found out that his life has not been right in the sight of God. He has become conscious that he has done much that is altogether wrong and that he has left undone a thousand things which he ought to have done—and he feels heavy of heart and sad in spirit. His old companions notice that there is a change in him, but he does not tell them much because they would only laugh at him. But he has a wound somewhere within his heart—an arrow has pierced his conscience—and his soul bleeds inwardly. The pleasure which he once took in sin is all now gone and, what is more, he grieves to think that he ever could have taken any pleasure in it. He hopes that God will forgive him, but he feels that he never will forgive himself. He strikes upon his breast

and wishes he could strike so hard as to kill the sin which is there—but he discovers that when he would do good, evil is present with him—and that makes him cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

He used to think that to believe in Christ was a very easy thing and that to be a Christian was almost as simple a matter as kissing his hand. But he finds it quite another thing, now. He has a heavy burden to carry and it is crushing him to the ground—he is fighting with himself and cannot get the victory. Whenever he sees his sin, it grieves him and he is grieved because he does not grieve more than he does. He wishes his heart would become softer and that by some means he could weep for sin more thoroughly, for he really does hate it with all his soul. Well now, this is one of the tender grapes and if any of you are brought into that condition, I thank God for it! This is a crop that will ripen and sweeten before long. Surely, there never was a truly gracious soul who did not put forth this as one of the first fruits of the Spirit—a secret mourning for sin.

Another tender grape is *a humble faith in Jesus Christ*. The man, perhaps, has got no farther than to say, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! I trust myself with You and You have said I am saved if I do that and, therefore, I conclude that I am saved, but, oh, that I had more faith! Oh, that I could trust You without a doubt! But, Lord, You know all things—You know that, humbly, tremblingly, I do accept You as my Savior and I am hopeful to be numbered among Your people, though meanest of them all. Though my faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, I bless You that I have even that grain! And I know that it will grow, for it has within it the life You did impart." That little trembling faith, like a freshly-lighted candle which is easily blown out, is, nevertheless, one of the tender grapes. It will grow, it will come to perfection in due time, for the least true faith has everlasting life in it! All the devils in Hell could not quench a single spark of God-given faith, for it is a *living thing* and it cannot be destroyed! This faith possesses immortality. It shall defy death, itself, yet, while it is so little, it is like the tender grape which gives a good smell.

Then there comes another tender grape and that is, *a genuine change of life*. The man has evidently turned right about—he is not looking the way he used to look and he is not living as he used to live. At first he fails and, perhaps, fails a good many times, like a child who is learning to walk and has many a tumble. But it will never walk if it does not tumble a bit. So, when men begin to live the new life, they have many slips. They thought that ugly temper of theirs would never rise again, but it does, and it grieves them very much. And some old habit, from which they thought they had clean escaped, entangles them unawares and they say, "Surely I *cannot* be a child of God if I do these things again!" And there is great sorrow, brokenness of spirit and soul-humbling. Well, that very soul-humbling is a tender grape! That effort to do better—not in your own strength, because you have none and you are sure to fail utterly if you attempt such a task alone—but the *effort* to do better *in the strength of God*, yet with the full consciousness of your own weakness—all that indicates a real change!

I know that there are some men who have been so long steeped in evil that to get their old habits down is a very difficult task. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Nothing but almighty power could get the blackness out of the Ethiopian's skin, or the spots out of the leopard. God can do it and He can reverse the whole current of our lives, but, nevertheless, while it is being done, there is often much painful contrition and brokenness of heart before Him. See what a change it is that the Lord works in a man when He converts him from the error of his ways! There is Niagara—see the mighty flood come roaring down—what a sight it is! But can that Niagara be made to flow up-hill? Yes, *God* can accomplish that marvelous feat, but while it is being done, think of the twists, twirls, whirlpools and sheets of spray that there will be! The vast mass of water has to stop and then to rush up again! What roaring of waves and shaking of rocks there will be even while God is performing this great operation! So is it when there is a change of heart in one who has long been steeped in evil—one who has been an open sinner. There is a great deal of distress of heart while the work is being done. Yet, if there is a radical change in the man, it is like the tender grape which is a sure sign of life in the vine which brings it forth.

Another very blessed fruit of spiritual life in the soul is *secret devotion*. The man never prayed before. He sometimes went to a place of worship, but he did not care much about it. Now you see that he tries to get alone for private prayer as often as he can. He may not have the privilege of a room to himself, but he climbs up into a hayloft, or goes down into a sawpit, or retires behind a hedge, or, in order to be quite alone, perhaps he walks the streets of London. It is very easy to be alone in a crowded street! In busy Cheapside there is many a man who is utterly lonely, for he does not know anybody in all the throng that rushes past him. It is a really awful loneliness that a man may have in the midst of a dense crowd—and his heart may then be talking with God as well as if he were shut up in some private room. A soul must get alone if it is really born again—it cannot live without private prayer. I also like to see the young beginners in the Divine Life carrying a pocket Testament, so that they may read a short portion whenever they can get a few spare moments—two or three verses to lie in their memory, like a lozenge under the tongue—to melt there and dissolve into their inmost being. It is a grand thing to keep a man right and it is one of the tender grapes on the vine when there is a love for the Word of God and a love for private prayer. I am sure that it is one of the tokens by which we are not very often deceived. "Behold, he prays," is an indication that God has renewed his heart!

Another of these tender grapes is *an eager desire for more Grace*, a longing for more of the good things of the Covenant. Why, those who are just brought to know the Lord would like us to preach seven sermons a day—and they would like to hear them all! I know that when I was first brought to Christ, I was ravenous after the Gospel. I felt like the great beast mentioned in the Book of Job, that "drinks up a river, and trusts that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth," so thirsty did I seem to be

after the river of the Water of Life! I do not think that the seats felt hard to me, then, or that standing in the aisle was too tiresome so long as it was but the Gospel that was preached to me, for there was an eager desire after it in my soul. If anyone can tell the poor seeking one who has just a little Light of God where he can get 10 times the Grace he has, I guarantee you that he will make the journey if he may but find it, that his feeble faith may grow to full assurance, that his repentance may be deeper, that his love to God may be more intense! If his whole soul is set on attaining this objective, it is manifest that these are the tender grapes that grow out of the life that is within the branches of the Vine.

There is also, in such persons, another very precious sign of Grace, and that is, *a simple love to Jesus*. The heart knows little, but it loves much. The understanding is not yet fully enlightened, but the affections are all on fire. "Your first love" is mentioned with special commendation in the Book of the Revelation and I think that some of us who have known the Lord for 30 years or more, can look back upon our first love with something of regret. I hope that we love Christ better, now, than we did then, but there was a vividness about our first love which we do not always realize in our more matured experience. It was then very much as it is when your servant lights a fire—at the first, the shavings, or the paper, or whatever it may be at the bottom of the kindling, makes a great deal more of a blaze than appears afterwards—and the fire is at its best when it all gets into one great steady ruby glow. It is to this state that the ardent love of Christians should come, but still, there is something very pleasing about that first blaze and I could almost wish that we always blazed away as we did in the fervor of our first love. That first flame was one of the sure tokens that the fire was there, just as the tender grapes prove that the life is in the Vine-branches. If, dear Friends, you are now full of love to Christ, do not let anybody quench it, or even dampen it, but may it burn more and more, like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame! God grant that this love, and all the other tender grapes that I have mentioned, may be seen in everyone who has newly sought and found the Lord!

II. Now I must try to answer our second question—WHAT IS THE LORD'S ESTIMATE OF THESE TENDER GRAPES? What does He think of that sorrow for sin, that little faith, that humble trust in His atoning Sacrifice, that earnest attempt to live a changed life, that weariness of frivolity, that private prayer and study of the Scriptures, that eager desire for more Grace and that childlike love? What does the Lord think of all this?

Well, first, He thinks so much of it that *He calls His Church to come and look at it*. Look at the verses that precede our text—"My Beloved spoke and said to me, Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away, for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." We do not usually call our friends to look at things which we do not, ourselves, admire. So here the Bridegroom calls His spouse to share in His joy in these tokens of the heavenly life of the Church of God! Be always on the lookout for the ten-

der grapes. I think I know some Christians who do not appreciate these early fruits as they ought. When dear children are brought to know the Lord, we cannot expect that such little shoots as they are should, at first, bring forth anything but tender grapes.

There are some who do not take that view of the matter. "Ah," they say, "there is no flavor in those grapes." Did you expect that there would be? "Oh," they cry, "they are tart and sour." Of course they are! While they are tender grapes, they *must* be so. You cannot get the ripeness or the sweetness of maturity in that which is just beginning to grow! Our Lord would not have us find fault with the fruit of young converts, but rather go and look at it, and admire it, and bless God that there is at least *some* and that it is as good as it is. "Ah," says one, "that young man does not know much!" Does he know that one thing, whereas he was blind, now he can see? Then be thankful that he knows as much as that. "Oh," you exclaim, "but he has not much prudence!" No, my dear Friend, do you suppose that this young man is to have as much prudence as you have at your age—and you are perhaps 60 or seventy? I might possibly say with truth that you have not quite so much zeal as you might have to go with your prudence. "Oh, but," you say, "we need the young man to be more mature!" Give him time and he will get as mature as you are, but while the grapes are still tender, your Master and his calls you to look at them and to thank Him for them, for there is something very cheering in the sight of the first weak, faint tokens of the working of the Holy Spirit in the soul of a young Believer!

What is Christ's estimate of these tender grapes? Why, next, *He calls them tender*. He does not call them *mature*—He does not speak of them as ripe—He calls them, "tender." Do you know how He might have described them? He might have called them sour, but He does not. He calls them, "tender." He likes to use a sweet word, you see—the softest and best word that He can use! So, when *you* describe a young convert, my dear Brother, do not at once point out his immaturity, but call him, "tender." Do not speak about his lack of discretion, but call him, "tender." Do not say, "Oh, well, I question whether he can be a child of God or not!" He *is* one of God's little ones. A little child is just as much its mother's child as the biggest one in the family is! And no doubt that little one whose voice we heard just now is as much beloved of the mother as any of her older sons or daughters. So it should be with those who are the little children in God's great family of love. Therefore, imitate your Lord and call them, "tender."

Then He says something more—"The vines with the tender grape give a good smell." Of what do they smell?

Well, first, they smell of *sincerity*. You say, "That young man does not know much, but he is very sincere." How many do I see, who come to make a confession of their faith in Christ, who do not know this doctrine, or have not had that experience, but they are very sincere! I can tell that they are genuine by the way they speak—they often make such dreadful blunders, theologically, that I know they have not learned it by rote, as they might get up a lesson. They talk straight out of their loving but ignorant hearts and I like that they should do so, for it shows how true they

are in what they say! And our Lord Jesus always loves sincerity. There is no smell so hateful as the smell of hypocrisy—a religious experience that is made to order, religious talk such as some indulge in, which is all cant—is a stench in the nostrils of God! The Lord save us from it! But these vines with the tender grape give forth the sweet smell of sincerity.

Next, there is about these young Believers a sweet smell of *heartiness*. Oh, how hearty they generally are, how earnest, how lively! By-and-by, some of the older folks talk about the things of God as if they were worn threadbare and there was nothing of special interest in them. But it is not so with these new-born souls—everything is bright and fresh, they are lively and full of earnestness—and Jesus loves that kind of spirit. He said to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, "I would you were cold or hot." It is lukewarmness that He cannot bear! But He approves of warm, simple heartiness—it is to Him like the smell of the vines that bear the tender grapes.

There is sure to be, also, about these young Christians the sweet smell of *zeal* and, whatever may be said against zeal, I will take up the clubs for it as long as I live! In the work of God we cannot do without fire! We Baptists like water because our Master has ordained the use of it, but we must also have fire, fire from Heaven, the fire of the Holy Spirit. When I see our young men and young women full of zeal for God's Glory, I say, "God bless them! Let them go ahead." Some of the old folk want to put a bit in the mouths of these fiery young steeds and to hold them in—but I trust that I shall always be on their side and say, "No, let them go as fast as they like. If they have zeal without knowledge, it is a deal better than having knowledge without zeal! Only wait a bit and they will get all the knowledge they need."

These young Believers have another sweet smell—they are *teachable*—ready to learn, willing to be taught from the Scriptures and from those whose instructions God blesses to their souls. There is also another delicious smell about them and that is they are generally *very joyful*. While they are singing, some dear old Brother who has known the Lord for 50 years, is groaning—what is the matter with the good man? I wish that he could catch the sweet contagion of the early joy of those who have just found the Savior! There is something delightful in all joy when it is joy in the Lord, but there is a special brightness about the delight of those who are newly-converted.

You see that Christ forms a correct, condescending, wise estimate of these vines with the tender grape. He calls His Church to look at them. He calls them tender. He says that they have a sweet smell and then He shows that He cares very much about them, for He says, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." He does not want even the tender grapes to be spoiled. Some people seem to think that none but advanced Christians are worth looking after, but our Lord is not of that opinion. "Oh, it was only a lot of girls that joined the Church," said somebody. "A lot of girls?" That is not the way that our Lord Jesus Christ speaks about His children! He calls them King's daughters—and let them be called so. "They were only a pack of boys and young men." Yes, but they are the material of which old men

are made! And boys and young men, after all, are of much account in the Master's esteem. May we always have many such in this Church!

III. So I come to my third and closing question—WHAT IS THE DANGER TO THESE TENDER GRAPES? The 15th verse says that they are in danger from foxes and gives the command, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

Dear young Friends who have lately found Christ, there are foxes about! We try all we can to stop the gaps in the hedge, that we may keep the foxes out, but they are very crafty and they manage to get in, sometimes. The foxes in the East are much smaller than ours and they seem to be even more cunning and more ferocious than those we have in this country—and they do much mischief to the vines.

In the *spiritual* vineyard there are foxes of many kinds. There is, first, *the hard censurer*. He will spoil the vines if he can—and especially the vines that have the tender grapes. He finds fault with everything that he can see in you who are but young Believers. You know that you are simply depending upon Christ for salvation, but this censurer says, "You are no child of God, for you are far from being perfect." If God had no children but those who are perfect, He would have none under Heaven! These censorious people will find fault with this and that and the other in your life and character. And you know well enough that you have all too many imperfections, but if they look for them, they can soon spy them out. Then they say, "We do not believe that there is any Grace in you at all," though you know that by the Grace of God you are what you are! It may be that there *is* a fault in you which they have discovered. Perhaps you were taken by surprise and suddenly overcome. Possibly they even set a trap for you and lured you into it, provoking you to anger, and then turning upon you, saying, "You have made a profession, have you? That is your religion, is it?" and so on. May God deliver you from these cruel foxes! He will often do so by enabling you not to mind them. After all, this is only the way in which all Christians have been tried—there is nothing strange in your experience from these censurers! And they are not your judges—you will not be condemned because they condemn you. Go and do your best in the service of your Lord! Trust in Christ and do not mind what they say—and you will be delivered from that kind of fox.

A worse fox even than that one, however, is *the flatterer*. He comes to you smiling and smirking and he begins to express his approval of your religion. And he very likely tells you what a fine fellow you are. Indeed, you are so good that he thinks you are rather *too* precise, you have gone a little over the line! He believes in religion, he says, fully, though if you watch his life, you will not think so. But he says that he does not want people to be too righteous—he knows that there is a line to be drawn and he draws it. I never could see where he drew it, but still, he says he does and he thinks that you draw the line a little too near the Cross. He says, "You might be a little more worldly—you cannot get through life in your way. If you get out of society, you may as well get out of the world! Why do you make yourself appear so singular?" I know what he is after—he wants to get you back among the ungodly. Satan misses you and he

wants to have you again, so he is sending Mr. Flatterer to wheedle you back, if possible, into your former bondage to himself. Get away from that fox at once! The man who tells you that you are too precise ought to be precisely told that you do not need his company! There never lived a man, yet, who was too holy, and there never *will* live a man who will imitate Christ too closely, or avoid sin too rigidly! Whenever a man says that you are too Puritanical, you may always smell one of these foxes! It would be better if we were all more Puritanical and precise. Has not our Father said to us, "Be you holy; for I am holy"? Did not our Lord Jesus say to His disciples, "Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"?

Then there comes another foul fox, *Mr. Worldly-Wiseman*. He says, "You are a Christian, but do not be a fool! Carry your religion as far as you can make it *pay*, but if it comes to *losing* anything by it, well then, don't you do it. You see, this practice is the custom of the trade—it is not right, I know—but still, other people do it and you ought to do it. If you do not, you will never get on in business." Mr. Worldly-Wiseman further says, "Never mind if you tell a lie or two, make your advertisements say what is not true—everybody else does it as a matter of course—why shouldn't you? Then try whether you cannot get a slice out of your customer here and a slice there when he does not know it—it is the custom of the trade! It is the way other people do and, as it is the custom, of course you *must* do it." To all such talk I reply that there is another custom, a custom that God has, of turning all liars into Hell! Mind that you do not come under that Divine Rule and Law! There is another custom that God has, namely, that of cutting down as hypocrites those who do not walk honestly and uprightly towards their fellow men. The plea of custom will not stand for a moment at the Judgment Seat of Christ—and it ought to have no weight with us here. I know that there are many young people who, unless they are watchful and careful at the very beginning of their spiritual life, will get lamed and never walk as they ought to, because this fox has bitten them.

There is another ugly fox about and that is *a doubting fox*. He comes and says, "You seem very happy and very joyful, but is it true? You appear to have become quite a different person from what you used to be, but is there, after all, such a thing as *conversion*?" This fox begins nibbling at every doctrine! He even nibbles at your Bible and tries to steal from you this chapter and that verse. God save you young people from all these foxes!

There are some foxes of *evil doctrine* and they generally try to spoil our young people. I do not think anybody ever attempts, now, to convert me from my beliefs. The other day, when a man was arguing with another, I asked him, "Why don't you try *me*?" "Oh," he said, "I have given you up as a bad case! There is no use trying to do anything with you!" It is so when we get to be thoroughly confirmed in our convictions of the Truth of God—they give us up and they generally say that we are such fools that we cannot learn their wisdom—which is quite correct! And so we intend to be as long as we live!

But with some of the younger folk, they manage it thus. They say, "Now, you are a person of considerable breadth of thought. You have an enlarged mind, you are a man of culture. It is a pity that you should cling to those old-fashioned beliefs which really are not consistent with modern progress." And the foolish young fellow thinks that he is a wonder and so is puffed up with conceit. When a man has to talk about his own culture and to glory in his own advancement, it is time that we suspected the truth about him! When a man can despise others who are doing vastly more good than he ever dreamed of doing and call such people antiquated and old-fashioned, it is time that he should get rebuked for his impudence, for that is what it really is! These clever men, as far as I know them, are simply veneered with a little learning, not a sixteen-thousandth of an inch thick! There is nothing in the most of them but mere pretence and bluster. But there are some who hold firmly to the old Gospel who have read as much as they are ever likely to do, and are fully their equals in learning, though they do not care to boast of their acquirements. Do not any of you young people be carried away with the notion that all the learned men are heretics—it is very largely the reverse—and it is your sham, shallow philosopher who goes running after heresy! Get out of the way of that fox, or else he will do much mischief to the tender grapes.

So, Brothers and Sisters, I close with this remark. If you have any sign of spiritual life. If you have any tender grapes upon your branches, the devil and his foxes will be sure to be at you. Therefore, endeavor to get as close as you can to two persons who are mentioned hard by my text, namely, the King and His spouse. First, keep close to Christ, for this is your life. And next, keep close to His Church, for this is your comfort. Get among elderly Christian people—seek to catch up with those who have long known the Lord, those who are farther on the heavenly road than you are. Pilgrims to Zion should go to Heaven in *company* and often, when they go in company, and they can get a Mr. Great-Heart to go before them, it saves them from many a Giant Slay-Good and many a Giant Grim—and they get a safe and happy journey to the Celestial City where otherwise they might have been buffeted and worried. Keep close to God's people, whoever they may be—they are the best company for you, young Believers! Some Christians may, like Bunyan's pilgrim, start on the road to Heaven, alone, but they miss much comfort which they might have had with companions of a kindred spirit. As for Christiana and her children and especially the younger folk, they will do well to keep in company with some one of the Lord's champions, and with the rest of the army with banners who are marching towards the Celestial City! God bless and comfort all of you who know His name, henceforth and forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
SOLOMON'S SONG 8:11-14; ISAIAH 5:1-7; LUKE 13:6-9.

Song of Solomon 8:11, 12. *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon. He leased the vineyard to keepers; everyone was to bring for the fruit*

thereof a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me. "The great Husbandman has graciously leased His vineyard out to me, that I may keep it, and dress it. He has made it mine for the time being. I have some ground to till, some plants to tend, some vines to prune. It may not be a very large vineyard, but still, it is mine, and I am accountable for it and must look well to it. It is before me. I am thinking of it. I am caring for it, I am praying about it."

12. *You, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.* This is our resolve—that our greater Solomon shall have the profits and proceeds of His own vineyard. It is ours on lease, but the freehold is His. He "must have a thousand," and we shall be well content with our share of the vintage—joyful and glad that we may have "two hundred."

13. *You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to Your voice: cause me to hear it.* "For to hear that voice will be far better than the 'two hundred' which shall be my share of the fruit! If I may have You with me, O my Lord, I will be better pleased, though my portion of fruit should be very small, indeed, for in having You, my portion will be great, indeed! I hear, my Lord, that some of Your people live with You until they are called Your companions. There are some whom You call Your friends. There are disciples whom Jesus loves. These 'hearken to Your voice: cause me to hear it.' Unstop my deaf ears, give me a sensitive spirit, let my soul thrill and my heart throb, and my whole being delight to obey every syllable that falls from Your blessed lips. 'You that dwell in the gardens, the companions hearken to Your voice: cause me to hear it.'"

14. *Make haste, my Beloved.* "Do not let me have to wait long for You, O my Beloved! Even at the beginning of this service, cause me to realize Your presence." [The exposition was always the first part of the service.—EOD.]

14. *And be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.* "Are there mountains that divide me from You? Come and leap over them, for You are swift of foot and sure of standing—'Be You like a roe or a young hart,' and when You come, the mountains of division shall change into mountains of spices, and all around me shall be sweet."

Isaiah 5:1. *Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard. My Well-Beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.* You and I, dear Friends, are placed in a position where we have very choice opportunities of glorifying our God. We are like "a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," most favorably placed for fruitfulness. The Well-Beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill—

2. *And He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and He expected that it should bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.* Is that my case? Is it your case, dear Friend? Has even our religion been a false thing? Has it been like wild grapes or poisonous berries? Have we been, at times, right only by chance and have we never carefully and sedulously sought to serve our Lord, or to bring forth fruit to His praise? O Lord, You know!

3-6. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more*

to My vineyard, that I have not done to it? Why, then, when I expected that it should bring forth good grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste. There is no destruction like that which comes when God destroys the fruitless vineyard! When a human enemy or the wild boar out of the forest lays it waste, it may be restored again, but if, in righteous wrath, the Divine Owner of the vineyard, Himself, lays it waste, what hope remains for it? "It shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste"—

6, 7. *It shall not be pruned, nor dug; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.* This passage has a special reference to God's ancient people and one cannot read it without noting how literally this terrible threat has been fulfilled!

Luke 12:6. *He spoke also this parable, A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.* Let us, everyone, read this parable as if our Lord Jesus Christ were now speaking it for the first time to each of us. There is a lesson here which we shall do well to heed.

7-9. *Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and found none: cut it down; why cumbers it the ground? And he answering said to him, Lord, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.* "In that case, I will plead for it no longer, for it will have had its full time of testing and every opportunity of bearing fruit—'After that you shall cut it down.'" The parable is so simple that it needs no explanation and, therefore, our Lord Jesus has not given any. May we all make a personal application of its solemn teaching! Amen.

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

FAITH VICTORIOUS
NO. 2481

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 25, 1886.

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came from that same region, and cried out to Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman great is your faith: be it to you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matthew 15:21-28.

WE learn from this chapter, dear Friends, that our Master was tired of battling with hypocrites and formalists and, therefore, withdrew Himself from them. They had come to Him with their foolish charges that His disciples did not observe the traditions of the elders and they made a great fuss about meats, drinks, washing of hands and all sorts of trifles. The Savior spoke very effectively to them—what if I say that He fired His great gun once and for all and silenced them? He told them that the real defilement which rendered men unclean before God was not a matter of externals, but it concerned the *heart*—and that it was not that which entered into a man by way of meats and drinks which defiled him—but that which came out of him in his words and actions which were the result of the impure desires within his heart.

Having thus, as it were, annihilated their flimsy arguments, or scattered them to the four winds of Heaven, the Master went right away from the quibblers. Do you not feel, sometimes, as if you would like to act in the same way? If you are true Believers. If you have learned to worship God in spirit and in truth, do you not get weary with the endless wrangles about rituals, outward ceremonies and the special and particular way in which Divine Worship should be performed? Do you not feel as if there were something better for you to do than to be always fighting about these secondary matters?

Besides this, the atmosphere that was round about these hypocrites and formalists was so heavy, so laden with noxious fog, so unfit for a spiritually-minded person to breathe, that the Lord wanted to get right

away from it to some quiet place where He might rest and, as it were, recover Himself from the sense of oppression and weariness which had come over Him in such company. So He proceeded far from His usual haunts to the very verge of His diocese—to the edge of heathendom—"Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." Mark tells us that He "entered into a house and would have no man know it." He did not go there to preach. He went into that far-off region that He might rest, unknown and in quiet for a brief season—and then go back to Galilee and, once more, preach the Gospel to those who might gather to hear Him.

Let us, from this narrative, learn to avoid making much of little insignificant things, lest by so doing we drive Christ away from us! Let us beware of giving heed to the traditions of men and putting them in the place of the Commandments of God lest Christ takes Himself to some other place and so the candlestick is taken out of our midst and we are left in the dark.

I would have you notice, dear Friends, that even when Jesus Christ goes away weary, He still has designs of love toward the people. He is not merely turning with disgust away from Scribes and Pharisees, but He is going to meet one whom His far-seeing eyes have beheld—a lonely, sorrowful woman who is coming to meet Him. Eternal decrees have appointed that at a certain spot this needy one shall meet Him and He knows that it is so. And, therefore, He is on His way to the borders of Tyre and Sidon to accomplish the purpose of almighty Grace! See how much the Savior thought of a single soul! To His heart it was worthwhile to walk many weary miles even to bless *one*. We are ambitious to bring hundreds to Christ and we are quite right if we desire it only for His Glory. Let us even enlarge our longing, but we shall never bring many to the Savior until we first feel overjoyed at the thought of bringing even one! We have not yet sufficiently learned the value of an immortal soul if we do not feel that we would be willing to live, say 70 years, to be the means of saving *one soul* and be willing to compass the whole globe—preaching in every city, town and village—if we might only be rewarded at the last with just *one* convert! Evidently our Lord Jesus realized intensely the value of one lost sheep and He left the 99 that He might go and find this solitary sad soul and bring her to Himself—

"Oh, come let us go and find them!"

Let us always be on the watch and be willing to be drifted by Providence anywhere if, in that drifting, we may come across some shipwrecked soul who may hail us—and we may effect its rescue and take it home to the Port of Peace.

I want to try to set forth the case of this woman, not going fully into the whole story—for I have preached upon this narrative many times—but especially dwelling upon the one point that this woman had great faith in Jesus Christ, an intense persuasion that He was able to heal her daughter and, moreover, that He had a most loving heart and was willing to work the cure she craved. She was determined that whatever might be her disadvantages, she would press her suit with the Son of David until she obtained from Him the blessing for which she was asking. There may

be someone to whom I am now speaking who is at a great disadvantage with regard to salvation, but, dear Friend, if you can believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is both able and willing to save you, I want to encourage you to press your suit with Him and never to cease your pleading until you get the desire of your heart—and He sends you away saying, "Be it to you even as you will."

I. First, then, concerning this woman, notice that SHE WAS ALTOGETHER AN OUTSIDER.

She was not a Jewess, she did not belong to God's chosen people, she was not one to whom Christ came to preach, for He said that He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She was what we sometimes call, "*a rank outsider*." To herself or her fathers, no Covenant promise had ever been given, no Prophet had ever spoken, no Gospel message had ever been delivered. So far from being within the Church, she was not even within the congregation! She had no connection whatever with the whole Gospel system—except such a connection as Infinite Grace was pleased to make.

I delight to think that every now and then persons come into this congregation who were not born and brought up in the midst of godly surroundings—for whom no mother has ever prayed, to whom no father has ever spoken a loving word concerning Christ—persons who were never regular occupants of seats in the House of Prayer and, perhaps, have only a very few times in their lives ever entered such edifices, who have not read the Bible and have not been in the habit of bowing the knee in prayer. Perhaps they have never breathed a prayer except in an hour of extreme sickness, or in some time of great alarm, as in the midst of a storm at sea. Well, this woman was a type of persons in this condition. She was no Israelite—she was a Canaanite woman and the Canaanites were condemned to die—they were to be exterminated out of the country! She was one of the handful who remained of the aboriginal tribes that were not slain by the sword of Justice, but had lived on, as it were, stealing their lives from the edge of the sword. She was one of a condemned race, a people who, though spared from execution, continued to worship false gods and who did much harm to Israel by introducing the worship of Baal among them. You remember the mischief worked by that Sidonian queen, proud Jezebel, who tried to stamp out the worship of Jehovah and to set up, instead thereof, her idol gods.

This woman who came to Christ was a descendant of those heathen tribes that inhabited the northern part of the country which God had given to Israel, yet she was the one who, almost beyond any other woman, *exhibited a mighty faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* I wonder whether I am addressing any who are, apparently, as far off from every religious hope as this poor Canaanite was, who, nevertheless, shall feel within their hearts faith in Him who is the Son of David and the Son of God—faith in the Christ who, from the highest Heaven, descended far that He might tread this guilty earth and bow His shoulders to bear His people's guilt that He might lift them from the deeps of Hell up to the heights of the happiness of God? I should not be at all surprised if this should prove to be the case, for God has often found His best servants

among His worst enemies! Some of the brightest diamonds in Christ's crown have been dug out of the darkest mines. Oh, that it might be so, that while I am preaching, someone who is far off from God might hear the great silver trumpet blow and might say in his heart, "I will go to Jesus with my cries and tears, for I believe Him to be the Son of God, mighty to save—and if mercy is to be had I will find it, though I deserve it not, but am far off from Him. I will press toward Him, I will break through every obstacle and barrier till I come to Him and obtain salvation at His hands."

That is our first point, this woman was altogether an outsider, and I hope our meditation on it may cheer some far-off one and induce him or her, also, to come to Jesus for salvation.

II. In the second place, this woman was not only far from all outward religious privileges, but SHE HAD A VERY DREADFUL CASE TO PLEAD.

She came to Christ to plead for her daughter who was "grievously vexed with a devil." Now, if one comes to Christ to ask Him to cure blindness, or sickness of any ordinary kind, it is a very simple case compared with this woman's. "Lord, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil; a demon has come and made her body to be the place of his abode. O Lord, Son of David, interfere in this horrible case! The devil's hand is in it and only You can cast him out." I know that there are some—it may be that they have stolen into this Tabernacle, perhaps driven in by the rain—whose case is so bad that they have to conclude that *the devil himself had a hand in it.* When they come before Christ, it is no common sin they have to confess, no ordinary soul-ruin they have to set before Him—it seems as if there has arisen from the infernal Pit some demon who has made them to be the special objects of his attack. The devil is in you, is he? Nevertheless, bring your case before Christ! If there were *seven* devils within you, instead of only one, remember her out of whom He cast seven devils—yes, and if it were a *legion*—if a whole band of demons had taken possession of you, remember the Gadarene demoniac out of whom Christ cast a legion of devils!

I know that you are ready to say, "My case is so horrible that I could not relate it." Do not relate it, except to Christ. "Oh, but my sin is so great that I could not tell you!" Do not tell me! I have heard enough, of late, about horrible sin and I do not need to hear any more about it—tell it to Jesus, tell it in His ear and though you are compelled to feel that in that sin there is something more sinful than usual, something extraordinary and out of the common, yet, I pray you, have faith in Jesus Christ that if you can but get at Him, He can deliver even *you* out of all this mischief, all this ruin and all this filth. Though the devil, himself, is in you, yet, if you believe in Jesus Christ and you come and trust Him, you shall be saved—

"He is able, He is willing!
Doubt no more."

Oh, that some poor heart, driven almost to despair, might nevertheless cry, "I do believe! I will believe in the dying, living Savior and I will never rest until I receive from His lips my sentence of pardon—and from the touch of His hands obtain that eternal life which shall deliver me from

the wrath to come." You may well be encouraged by the case of this woman who became a great Believer although she began far off from God—and in her desperate sorrow the devil himself had a large share.

III. Further, when this woman came to Christ, she found that HE WAS SHUT UP AWAY FROM HER.

That fact does not appear in Matthew's account, but, as I have reminded you, it is recorded in Mark's Gospel. When our Lord Jesus Christ went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, He, "entered into a house, and would have no man know it." It is quite clear that He needed rest. He had traveled, as it were, *incognito,* for He did not want to be known and He had gone into a house and shut the door. Then Mark adds, "But He could not be hid, for a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him and came and fell at His feet." It did seem a dreadful thing to think that Christ could heal her daughter and she believed that He was willing to do it, yet there He was, inside the house, shut away from her. And Peter said, "You really cannot see Him." And even John said, "Do not trouble the Master, for He is very weary and must rest." And practical James said, "My good woman, this is a matter that must rest with us and we cannot have the Master interrupted just now." They all conspired to keep her away, for He would have no man know where He was. He had asked them to guard the door a little while, to let Him be in quiet. He needed to recover from the sickness of heart that He felt at the remembrance of those carping Pharisees, so He must be a alone little while. Those who work for Christ know how much they sometimes need to be left alone, yet it was very discouraging to the woman to find that the door was shut when Christ was in the house.

Now, dear Sirs, are there any of you here who have great faith in what the Lord Jesus Christ would do for you if you could but come to Him? He well deserves that you should have, for there is none like He, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. He is willing to forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy and He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." But, perhaps, with all your faith, it has seemed to you as if the door was shut against you. I used to feel that if my brother found peace with God, I could understand it. And if my sisters rejoiced in the salvation of Christ, I was very glad and could well believe that—but I thought that for *myself* there was no door of hope, no promise that could be intended for me. It is often quite easy to believe for other people. The difficulty is in believing for yourself—and sometimes this is the form of the devil's temptation—"The Savior is not accessible to *you.* He does not mean, even, to *speak* to you, your case is such that you are shut out from His mercy." If Satan lies to you like that, I trust that you will say, like this woman, "Well, if the door is shut, I mean to go in, all the same. The Son of David is hiding, is He? But *He* cannot be hid."

I like what someone calls, "this woman's glorious impudence." The angels, when they come before their Lord, are full of holy reverence and veil their faces with their wings. I doubt not that this woman also had her fears, but at that particular time she exercised a Grace that was more to the purpose. Forgetting all her fears, she said, "He cannot be hid. I must see Him, and I will. My child at home is tossed and torn with a demon,

thrown into the fire and into the water, and I am full of agony on her account. A mother's heart is in me and I cannot rest until I have seen this great Physician. He can heal my child and I believe He will—I *must* get to Him." So she forces her way past the bodyguard of Apostles and gets within the door and falls at Christ's feet! And there she lies and cries, "O Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil!"

I wish that each of you would act like that poor woman did and say, "Oh, if the door of mercy is shut against me, yet I must still try to open it! Whatever the barrier is in my way, it will have to yield, for I must be saved. I cannot be lost, I cannot be content to sit down and perish in my sins! I must get to Jesus Christ and cry to Him for pardon, and I am resolved that I will do so. With holy impudence, as it may seem to others, I am determined that I will approach Him and cast myself at His dear feet."

I like the splendor of this woman's faith. She is a Canaanite whose case has the devil mixed up with it and from whom Christ conceals Himself—yet she must and will somehow get to Him! Now, what happens next?

IV. The woman's faith was so great that our Lord delighted to see it and He wanted to see how far it would go, so He put it to a further test. Therefore, next, when she cried to Christ, HE REFUSED HER ANY ANSWER.

She had broken in upon His privacy. She had daringly invaded the apartment where He sought to be in quiet and she lay at His feet and prayed a sweetly-appropriate prayer. She expressed her faith in His Divinity, calling Him, "Lord," and her faith in His blessed royal Humanity, calling Him the "Son of David," after she had said, "Have mercy on me," asking only for mercy. It was the only plea she used, "Mercy, Lord, mercy! Son of David, mercy!" Yet this was, at first, all the answer she received—*"He answered not a word."* As Augustine says, "The Word spoke not a word," and that was so unlike Him. He who was always so ready with responses to the cry of grief had no response for her! As if He were made of stone, He scarcely gave her a glance! And when she looked up to those lips which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, they dropped not a syllable on her. Oh, what would she not give if He would but speak? He could heal her daughter with a *word*, yet not a word did He utter! An awful silence filled the room as she waited for Him to speak. But she did not give up in despair—that is the point—she still had faith in Him and when there was nothing for her ears to hear, there was still something for her heart to believe.

Perhaps I am addressing some poor lost one who has been praying. You have been crying to Christ for mercy as best you could. You have implored Him, "Lord," You have called Him, "Son of David," You have lain at His feet, you have wept, you have implored, you have entreated mercy, crying, "Lord, have mercy upon me." Yet He has answered you not a word. You have been to hear the Gospel, but you seem to be worse, rather than better, for hearing it. You have spoken to a Christian friend

about your fears, but he has not been able to remove them and, all the while you have prayed and prayed again and yet again!

I will tell you what happened to me long ago. When I was convinced of sin, I began to pray. After my own fashion, in deep distress, and from my very heart I prayed many a time, yet I received no answer and scarcely a ray of hope had found its way into my soul. I heard my mother say, as she was talking to us children about our souls, that she did not believe there was living a single man who dared to declare that he had truly sought the Savior and that the Savior had refused him. She said she did not think that even in Hell there was one who would be bold enough to accuse the Savior of having refused him when he sought Him with prayer and in faith. I did not say so to her, but I thought within my heart, "I am one who has really and sincerely sought for salvation through Jesus Christ and I have not found it." And I made up my mind that I would tell others that Christ did *not* hear prayer and that one *might* seek Him with all his heart and yet not find Him.

Friends, I have never told that untruth to anyone yet, for before I had an opportunity of declaring what I thought was true, I had found Him, myself! I discovered that, after all, it was *I who was deaf* to His voice and not He who was too far off to answer me! I heard that blessed text, "Look to Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," and at once I looked to Him and I found peace through the blood of the Cross! So will you, dear Friend, as soon as you look to Him by faith. If you have prayed, keep on praying! If you have cried apparently in vain, still cry to Him!

Remember that *there is no other door at which you can knock,* therefore you had better continue to knock at this one! If you were on a wild prairie at night and had lost your way and, at last, you saw a light in a window and you came to a lone house and knocked there, but no one came to the door at first, you would say to yourself, "Well, I must knock again, because there is probably not another house within 20 miles. I may be eaten by wolves before I find another, so I will just knock, and knock, and knock, and knock again till I gain admission." Keep on knocking, dear Friend—there is Somebody hearing you—depend upon it! And though He may seem slow in coming, He is sure if He is slow. He is just trying you a little to see if you really are in earnest. You have heard of run-away knocks at our doors—there is a loud rap and the poor servants go to answer it but there is nobody there, for the mischievous boys have run away. Well, the Master is seeing whether you are going to play with Him with run-away knocks!

If you are a genuine seeker of entertainment in His great house of mercy, you will stand and say, "I will still knock, and perish knocking if I must, but I will never go away from this spot! Jesus Christ can save me. He alone can save me. I believe that He will save me and I will never cease to pray while my heart beats and my tongue moves. If I have to die praying, I will die so, but I will never cease from it till I get an answer of peace." Oh, that God would bless this message to some who have been discouraged by having to wait long for answers to their prayers!

V. This woman had a further discouragement, for JESUS REFUSED THE PRAYER OF HIS OWN APOSTLES. They began to help her in prayer,

as she was not, herself, heard. They took some sort of pity on her and went to the Master and said to Him, "Please, Lord, send her away; she makes such a noise, crying after us." Not out of pity to her, so much as from love of quiet for themselves, they became intercessors for her with the Lord Jesus Christ. Probably I am speaking to someone who says, "Sir, all you have said is true about me and I have prayed up to now in vain. But I have asked a Christian friend to pray for me. The other Monday night, I penciled a little note and put it on the table in the Tabernacle, and they prayed for me at the Prayer Meeting. I have asked you, dear Sir, to pray for me, and I hope you have, but no good has come of it. I am in the same state of sorrow and misery after all the prayers that have been presented on my behalf." Yes, dear Friend, and do you remember what happened in the case before us? The disciples soon gave up the task. They prayed their little bit of prayer and they did not get the answer they wanted, so they left—but the woman did not—*she had more perseverance in her than the Apostles had.* The Master answered them and then they stopped and said no more—but that did not stop *her*! They might all cease praying, but she would not cease.

Now, suppose the prayers of a whole Church have failed with regard to you? Still pray on! Yes, if all the saints who live on earth had joined in one common intercession and had all cried to God for you—and they had received no favorable answer about you and, therefore, had ceased praying—still you should not cease crying to the Lord. Go on praying, for He will yet hear you, even in such a case as that—if you can have the splendid faith to be a forlorn hope, and go alone, and only pray the more because others cease to pray for you. Like this woman, worship the Lord and say, "Lord, help me." Though your prayer grows shorter because you are getting weary, if it grows very intense and you still keep on pleading, it cannot be long before a prayer-hearing Savior will give you the desire of your heart! I like this point in the woman, although the Apostles had ceased praying, she had not.

VI. Next, notice that in answer to the Apostles, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST GAVE HER A VERY HEAVY REBUKE. He said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

That seemed to exclude her altogether, yet still she persevered—and I want to draw a parallel between her case and yours. Dear Friend, possibly someone has whispered in your ear, "Suppose you are not one of the elect." Well, that was very much what our Lord's expression meant to her. She was not one of the chosen people and she had heard Christ say, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Notice that this woman does not battle with that Truth of God at all. She does not raise any question about it. She wisely waives it and she just goes on praying, "Lord, help me! Lord, have mercy upon me!" I invite you, dear Friend, to do the same. You are not, at present, in a state of mind to understand the glorious doctrine of election. You have, now, the dark side of it turned towards you and, I suppose, it will be so with you until you exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—when you will be able to see it from another point of view. But, anyhow, there is Christ able to save you and He never yet rejected a sinner who came to Him! Therefore come

along with you. As to that difficulty about your election, forget it. If you ask me to set up a ladder and to climb to Heaven and turn over those leaves, folded and sealed, of God's great Book of Life, I cannot do it—neither can you! But I can again remind you that He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." He has bid me go and "preach the Gospel to every creature," and you are a creature, so I preach it to you on the strength of being commanded to preach it to you! I invite you to say, "Of the house of Israel, or not of the house of Israel, O Son of David, have mercy on me!" Whether you seem to be sheep or goat, still cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me! I will never leave You, nor cease to pray to You till You shall grant my petition."

This is the kind of faith that Jesus Christ delights in! He was hearing this woman's prayer all the while and He was resolved to answer it. His heart was getting rest out of her faith—it was such a blessed change for Him from those hypocritical Pharisees with all their rubbish about washing pots and cups! It was such a delight to Him to see this woman believing in Him in real earnest. Faith is the food on which Christ feeds, it is the wine He drinks! This is the cluster that fills the chalice He holds in His hand! These are the apples that are delicious to His taste. He loves being trusted and if the biggest sinner out of Hell will trust Him, that trust is sweetest of all to Christ! O you Canaanite woman, you with whom the devil has had to do, you who have not been heard in your prayers up till now—if you can have the courageous faith to not take, "No," for an answer, but to press on and believe that the Son of David must and will accept you, you shall be accepted! It is but a little while and He will say, "Be it to you even as you will."

VII. Lastly, SHE KEPT ON PLEADING UNTIL SHE PREVAILED. The disciples had given up praying, as I have shown you, and the woman had received a severe rebuff from Christ, yet she continued her prayer. Look, she worships Christ, adores Him, crying, "Lord, help me!" Even when she has done that, she gets only this for an answer, "It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs"—the word really means, "the little dogs." Oh, but that was a hard saying, was it not? It was a good nut with a sweet kernel—and she knew how to crack it—but it had a very hard shell. There are many who would have turned away after such an answer as that, but this Syrophenician was a grand woman and Christ knew it. She had splendid faith and He prized it, otherwise He would not have tried it so! He knew that she could bear even this test, so He called her a "dog."

Notice that *she kept on with her pleading* whether she was a dog or no dog! Instead of turning back when called a dog, she just pressed forward all the more. She did not raise any question and say, "Now, Lord, that is really too bad. I may be a wretched woman, but I am not a *dog*." No, after Christ had called her a dog, she took the title to herself and found no fault with it and, dear Friends, whatever the Bible calls you, accept it! Do not quarrel with it, for it is quite true. God's Word was not sent to flatter human nature, but to give a faithful description of it. Then, believe it, accept it. Say, "Well, Lord, you call me a 'dog.' It is quite true, I am only a dog."

Look how this woman turns this title round! She seems to say, "Lord, I am a dog, but, then, *I am Your dog and even dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* By this it is implied that she meant, "Lord, I am Your dog and I am happy to be Your dog. I would sooner be Your dog than be the devil's darling. But, Lord, You call me a 'little dog.' Well, the little dogs are those that are allowed to come indoors and to come near their masters, so I am permitted to come near You. And being under the table, if a crumb falls, the little dog gets it. Lord, let me have the crumbs! You give a loaded table to Your sheep of whom You speak so much—the house of Israel—there is bread enough and to spare for them! You can give me this crumb that I crave and there will be quite as much left as the children can eat." I like to hear this woman talk in this fashion. As one says, "the children of Israel, that Christ had been with, had turned into dogs; but here is a dog of a Canaanite and she has turned into a child." I am sorry to say that there are some who seemed to be children of the Kingdom who turn into dogs and leave Christ. But there are many poor dogs with no privileges that are made willing, by Sovereign Grace, in the day of Christ's power, and the dogs are turned into His children!

Now, whatever you really are, poor Sinner, confess that you are just that! And whatever hard word Christ gives you, say, "It is true, Lord." And then come with the hard words and with your broken heart, and just lie at His feet and say, "Lord, still hear me, and grant me this great blessing, for it will be but a crumb to You. Dogs get crumbs—let me get Grace." That was a grand utterance of faith! I wish that some to whom I am now speaking would exercise such faith in Jesus Christ. Speak after this fashion, "Though all men shall tell me that I shall be lost, I will not believe them. There is a Savior and I mean to have Him as mine. Though all men shall tell me that Christ cannot save me, I will not believe it, for Christ can save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him and I cannot have gone beyond the uttermost, so I will believe that He is able to save me."

Do I speak to anyone who says, "But you do not know how I am discouraged?" Well, then, I put this question to you—"Are you a Canaanite?" No, you are not of that accursed race, you are of the same race as the most of us, many of whom have been saved. Yet remember that Canaanite as this woman was, *she* believed in Christ! Then why should not you? Have you prayed as she did, distinctly, definitely and received no answer? Well, if you have, your discouragement is not greater than hers was. But listen. Did the Lord Jesus Christ *ever* say that He was not sent to you? Did He *ever,* anywhere in Scripture, indicate that His commission excluded *you*? He *did* seem to say that to this woman, yet she could bear even *that* discouragement—and you have never had as heavy a cross as that to carry!

Next, did the Lord Jesus Christ ever call you a dog? Tell me anywhere in Scripture where He calls *you,* "dog." But if He did, this woman overcame that difficulty and so should you. O dear Soul, if there should stand between you and Christ all the legions of the infernal Lake of Fire, you might venture through them all in the name of Christ! If there did lie

between my soul and Christ, seven hells, I would swim through them that I might get at Him! He must be able to save me! It cannot be possible that I should have gone beyond the power which is Omnipotent, or that I have sinned beyond the virtue of the blood of the Son of God! It cannot be that I should have sins that should be mightier than Almighty Mercy! Write me down as the blackest of the black and vilest of the vile—what then? So much the more Glory to the Grace of God when He shall save such a sinner as I am! Therefore I will come and trust Him!

O blessed and gracious Spirit, sweetly compel some to believe in Jesus! You deserve, O Lord Jesus, that we believe You up to the hilt! That we believe You to the uttermost, for You are more than our faith can ever make You to be. Help us to believe You. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." This is the Gospel! Accept it and you shall find it true. God grant it! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 15:18-31.

Verses 18-21. *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* He went right away, not because He was afraid to speak the Truth, but because, having done so, He did not care to remain in the company of those who were round about Him. He would rather go even to the verge of heathendom than live in the midst of Pharisaic hypocrisy—"Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon."

22. *And, behold*—There is something here that is worth beholding, so the Holy Spirit draws attention to it, just as we sometimes print, N.B., nota bene—mark well—"behold"—

22. *A woman of Canaan came from that same region.* Possibly she did not know that Christ had come, but, anyhow, when Christ comes, sinners come. He journeyed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and this woman met Him.

22, 23. *And cried out to Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.* Perhaps they meant, "Give her the blessing and let her go. You are seeking quiet, here, and she will not let you, nor us, either, have any. 'Send her away.'" They made a great mistake when they said, "She cries after *us*." It was Christ to whom she cried, not His disciples!

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* "My ministerial commission is only to the Jews." As a Savior, He comes to save sinners out of all nations, but as the Messiah, His special mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

25. *Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me.* "Then she came and worshipped Him." If Jesus Christ was not really and truly

God, He was a base imposter to allow this woman to worship Him! She had called Him, "Lord," once before, and He did not rebuke her, and now she not only calls Him, "Lord," but she *worships* Him. She was doing quite right, for He is none other than very God of very God! "Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me."

26. *But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* Or, "to little dogs," for the word is in that form in the Greek.

27. *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* It was well for her that the Master had used that diminutive form of the word, for the bigger dogs in the East were not permitted in the house, but the little dogs were admitted to play with the children. She seemed to snatch at that ides as she cried, "Truth, Lord: yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," as though the greatest possible blessing to her was but a crumb to Him and but a crumb compared with the bread which He was putting upon the table of Israel. The greater blessing which He was giving to the children might prompt Him to give a crumb to her.

28. *Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith: be it to you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Oh, the triumph of faith! God grant it to us! Yet this woman may surely shame many of us—we have not half her discouragements and we have not half her confidence in Christ!

29. *And Jesus departed from there.* He is always on the move, for He has always something else to do. As soon as His deed of Grace is done in one part, He hastens to another. "And Jesus departed from there."—

29-31. *And came near to the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came to Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.* This was Israel's table, indeed, and when you see these many mighty cures that Christ worked, you can easily justify the speech of the Syrophenician woman, and agree with her that what she sought was only a *crumb* compared with the bountiful feast of fat things that was prepared for the favored nation!

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

AN UNPARALLELED CURE
NO. 2482

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
SEPTEMBER 13, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1886.**

"As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the mute spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never seen like this in Israel." Matthew 9:32, 33.

As we read the chapter we noticed the rapidity with which the cures worked by the Savior followed each other, how much of mercy was compressed into a short space of time. He has no sooner healed the paralytic than, straightway, we find Him curing the woman who had an issue of blood, then raising to life the ruler's dead daughter and next giving sight to two blind men, then quickly after that, healing this poor man who was deaf and dumb—and possessed with a devil. Matthew seems to call attention to this succession of cures—"As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil." The blind men disposed of, here is a dumb demoniac ready for the great Physician's hands. No sooner is one act of mercy done than there is another person needing an equal display of Grace and power—and the Savior at once goes to the task and heals again, again, again and yet again! What an inexhaustible fullness there is in Christ! He can bless and bless, and bless, and bless and still remain as full of blessing as ever.

I think that this ought to encourage us who have heard of revivals of religion. There is no time in which anyone is so likely to be converted as when many others are being brought to the Lord. When the Savior seems to rouse Himself up to an extraordinary display of power, it is well to be present and to put in our plea that we may share in those waves of mercy which follow so quickly, one upon the other! Have you heard of any who have been saved of late? Have your own friends been converted? Has the Lord been gracious to any of your old companions? Come, then, and put your case before the Lord Jesus Christ, feeling that you will not weary Him, that He will not need to pause till He has gathered fresh strength, but that He can continue to bless without cessation! Say to Him, as we have many times sung—

***"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
You are scattering, full and free.
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing—
Let some drops fall on me."***

And you need not be so modest as to say, "Let some *drops* fall on me," for when the Lord blesses, He delights to give *showers* of blessing—showers in one place and then showers in another. He can still act in this glorious fashion, blessing one after another without a pause.

Then observe, dear Friends—for it lies at the very door of our subject—the wonderful readiness of the Lord thus to bless men. You do not often find them kneeling down and importuning Him to bless them. It does occur, sometimes, when there is great faith and He means to try and prove it, but, as a rule, and especially in this chapter, you can see how ready the Lord was to bless. A paralyzed man is dropped through the ceiling by four friends and the Savior at once sees their faith before a word is spoken—and He bestows both forgiveness of sin and healing of sickness. In another case, the child lies dead and the father asks Christ to come and He comes. He was as willing to come as the father was that He should come. Then, next, a woman comes behind Him and touches the hem of His garment and the virtue flows out even from the blue fringe of the seamless robe which He wore! Then the blind men asked for sight and Jesus gave it to them!

But here was one who could not ask, for he was dumb. I do not suppose that he even went the length of a *desire*, for he was possessed of a devil—and that devil mastered the poor creature who was both deaf and dumb, for the Greek word means that he was a mute. He could not speak and he could not hear others speak, so the Savior, though He perceived no faith in him, and no prayer could come from him, yet noticed and honored the faith of *those who brought him*—and swiftly and spontaneously did His mercy flow out to this poor deaf and dumb demoniac!

Let us admire this readiness of Christ to bless and put our admiration to a practical use. Come, dear Heart, you have not to plead with Him to make Him merciful, for He loves you better than you love yourself! You have not to persuade Him to be gracious—Christ is no churl, holding His blessings with a tight hand as though He would rather hoard than bestow them on the needy. No, as freely as the sun scatters his light. As freely as the clouds dispense rain, so does Christ bless where He sees that there is need of blessing! Then let us put our friends in Christ's way by breathing a secret silent prayer for them. And let us also put *ourselves* in Christ's way—and may the great Master speedily heal us to the praise of the Glory of His Grace!

So I think we see very clearly in our Lord's working these two things, rapidity and readiness.

Then, once more, observe the great ease with which the Savior moved in every case. I do not know whether it strikes you, but it seems to me that Matthew, in the text before us, intimates the remarkable ease of the Savior. I will read it to you again. "As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the mute spoke." The Evangelist does not say that Jesus Christ cast out the devil—it was done so much as a matter of course by the Savior that Matthew takes it for granted that it was done! When you have to get into the swing of such a narrative as this and you have some five or six

different cures to relate, you seem to arrive at the feeling, "Well, they have only to come to Christ and the cure is worked at once."

Sometimes the Master healed with a word. At other times with a touch. Occasionally, it was not His touch, but the touch of the person healed. And here we are not told whether it was by a word, or a look, or how it was that the healing act was done. Let Christ, Himself, once meet the devil and that is an end to Satan's dominion! I may stand here and preach my very soul away—and effect *nothing* by the most earnest labor. But when the Master comes into the field, what is there that can stand before Him? The devil must flee even out of a deaf and dumb man who cannot plead for himself! He must depart when once the Master puts forth His Divine Power.

O Sirs, this is my hope for the salvation of the unsaved! If it depended upon *my* preaching, or upon *your* pleading, I would have scant hopes! But as it depends upon Him who has risen from the dead and who always lives at the right hand of God. As it depends upon Him who has pledged us His Presence wherever two or three are met together in His name and who has promised to be with His people wherever the Gospel is preached, then we *expect* to see wonders of Grace worked by Christ the mighty Miracle-Worker! May we see some of them worked in our midst this very hour!

This will suffice by way of introducing the subject and now let me call your careful attention to this special case as an encouragement to any who are seeking mercy from the Lord.

I. The multitudes said, "It was never seen like this in Israel" and the multitudes spoke the truth, for, first, IT WAS A VERY EXTRAORDINARY CASE. Here was a man deaf and dumb and possessed by a devil—and probably deaf and dumb *because* possessed by a devil.

The parallel of this poor man's case, if we take the miracle and spiritualize it, can be found in some *sinners who are dumb so that they cannot express their needs*. They cannot pray. I do not say that they *desire* to do so, but they are honest when they say that they cannot even describe themselves, or cannot so plead for themselves as to cry to God for mercy. They have the conviction that they would be hypocrites if they did. They feel as if it would be an insult to God if they were to *attempt* to pray. All this is a mistake, but yet such is their feeling. This poor man's dumbness came of the possession of the devil and so does this inability to pray—it is often the work of Satan upon the heart of sinners when they cannot speak. If anyone were to ask them about their soul's affairs, they could not say anything. They have often, perhaps, been addressed by earnest Evangelists who have tried to find out what was wrong with them, but they could never give an answer. There are such spiritually dumb persons who have long come to this Tabernacle. I often wonder that they continue to come, yet they do, and Brothers and Sisters have tried in all manner of ways to get at them, but they cannot. These people seem to be shut in by impenetrable barriers of ice, so that they cannot be reached by any ordinary means. They cannot reply to a question, for they are

dumb. It must be a dreadful thing to feel as if you could not tell even the Lord about your case!

But then, perhaps, it is worse to be deaf, and *this dumb man was also deaf so that he could not hear Jesus speak*. It is a great deprivation to be unable to tell the Master our trouble, but it is a greater deprivation not to be able to hear that dear Voice which can wake the dead, which can heal the sick, which can change the nature, which can speak Grace into the soul! There are some in our midst who seem as if they could not hear. They come to the place of worship, but they say—

"I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel.
If anything is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel."

I am glad when they get as far as that last line, but they are deaf until the voice of God goes with the voice of the ministry. If they read the Bible, it does not have that effect upon their conscience and their heart which it does when it is accompanied by the mighty working of the Holy Spirit.

Then there are persons who appear to be *like this demoniac, not even desiring good*. They feel as if they were under the influence of Satan. I know a well-educated man in a good position in society who might be a comfort to his wife and family. You would like to speak to him if you could see him just now, but I would not like you to see him at *any* time when he is drunk—then he is a curse to his poor family and to the whole district! Oh, what a life a man leads when once the demon of drunkenness has gained the mastery over him! I do not wonder that such a man is both deaf and dumb to the Gospel!

Some are in the grip of that foul and loathsome demon of licentiousness—they seem as if they went after their lust greedily, they cannot be kept back from it and, of course, they cannot pray—they cannot hear the Word with any right realization of its power. Satan has such a mastery over them that theirs is a terrible case, like that of this deaf and dumb demoniac. I do not wonder that the multitudes said, when Christ had cured him, "It was never seen like this in Israel."

II. So, next, it was not only an extraordinary case that was brought to Christ, but IT WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY CURE that He worked, for we read that the devil was cast out and the mute spoke!

Note, first, that *the devil was cast out*. Whenever he goes out of himself, he always comes back again. But when he is cast out, He that threw him out keeps him out. There are some men that reform, though they hardly know why, and then, by-and-by, they go back to their old sin and they are worse than ever. But whenever Christ comes to deal with this strong-armed man, He ejects him with a Divine Violence and never permits him to return, for the stronger Man who drove him out keeps that house in peace. This casting out of the devil is a very wonderful work. May the Lord come and perform it in our midst! May the demon of drunkenness, or lust, or whatever it is, be flung out of the window, never to return to the soul again!

Then, next, *the dumb man spoke.* That, also, was a wonderful thing. Deaf and dumb, how did he know the meaning and value of different sounds? Ordinarily we would have to explain to such a person what was the force of such a vowel, or of such a combination of vowels and consonants, but this man at once spoke! Matthew does not record what the man said, though he does tell us what the multitudes said. Curiosity might lead us to want to know what this man said than what the multitudes said, but the Lord knew that it would be more to our edification to know what the *multitudes* testified concerning the miracle! What is recorded is of much more value than what is omitted, we may be sure of that.

I wonder, however, what the man did say. I do not know, but I can imagine what I would have said if I had been in his place. I would have said, "Blessed be the Lord God who has delivered me from the power of the devil!" I would also have said, "O Lord Jesus, I love You! Let me follow You wherever You go!" I would not have known what I did *not* want to say under such circumstances, but if there had been some great unusual word to express intense gratitude, I would have wanted to use that—

"Oh, for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak!"

It is always amazing to me, but I have often seen it—some foul blasphemer, or some other great sinner has been converted and almost immediately he has spoken the language of Canaan as sweetly as if he had been an old saint! I have known a woman rescued from the streets, foul with vice, yet as soon as ever she has been truly penitent at the Savior's feet, the tears with which she has washed those precious feet have been as pure as ever fell from a godly matron's eyes! The Grace of God makes marvelous changes where it comes into the soul, for the devil is cast out and a holy tongue is put in! Saintly speech is taught—not in 12 lessons, as I hear that some teach the German tongue—but in a single lesson is taught that blessed language of prayer, praise and testimony to the power and love of Christ which, I think, must have been what this man said. "It was never seen like this in Israel," said the multitudes, for they could hardly believe their own ears when this poor deaf-mute commenced talking at such a rate! It was wonderful and I am sure that if some people I know are saved, the world will scarcely believe it!

I saw a Brother this week. I had seen his wife some time ago and I had known how brutally he had treated her. And when I saw him confessing Christ and weeping over his sin, I was ready to weep on his neck to think that he should be among us loving the Savior when once his mouth was full of oaths and cursing and the drunkard's cup seemed to be always at his lips. The Lord does great wonders! If there are any more of these outrageous sinners here, may He come and deal with you till everybody shall say of Tom, or Harry, or Jack, or Polly, "The Lord has made such a change in that great profligate, it was never so seen in Israel." God be thanked for the very hope that such a miracle of mercy may yet be

worked! Thus, first, this was an extraordinary case, and next, it was an extraordinary cure.

III. But, then, it is all accounted for by this fact, IT WAS WROUGHT BY AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON!

There had been many Prophets in Israel and God had worked miracles by them, but now there stood in Israel *the Incarnate God Himself*. He who had now come to deal with the sick and with those possessed of devils was "The Mighty God." Omnipotence was in His hands, Omniscience was in His eyes, Infinite Love was in His heart and He had come to deal with the woes and needs of men. Surely, Brothers and Sisters, in such a case we might expect that there would be things done that had never before been seen in Israel! Israel was the land of wonders and yet here was a wonder such as Israel never marveled at before and, if it had never been seen in Israel, you may depend upon it that it had never been seen anywhere else in the whole world! So, if Christ comes and saves great sinners and makes even His people wonder and say, "It was never seen like this among us," then, depend upon it, it was never so seen anywhere else!

If conversion had to be worked by ministers, Evangelists and teachers, we would like to pick out some very tender hearts and gentle spirits—those who had been trained from their youth up in the ways of godliness—but as conversion is always the work of the Lord, Himself, and the new birth is worked by the Holy Spirit, then it does not matter what are the materials with which the Lord has to deal! God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham! He can call Saul of Tarsus from among the Pharisees and Matthew from among the publicans—and the woman who loved much from among the harlots! Christ could save the dying thief, yes, and the very chief of sinners had an open gate of mercy because God, Himself, had assumed human flesh and had come down to save the guilty. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth."

I seem to myself to stutter and stammer over these glorious Truths of God! Oh, that my soul could speak without being hindered by my lips and that I could fully tell how great a Savior this is, to whom nothing is difficult, much less impossible! You greatest sinner, you blackest sinner, you most hardened sinner, the Lord Jesus is able to save you *now*! Believe it and believe Him and, according to your faith, so shall it be to you! Yes, it shall be so to you this very night before you leave this House of Prayer!

I have now only to speak for just a few minutes to someone who may be saying, "If I were to be saved, Sir, it would be the most extraordinary thing that ever happened! If I were to become washed in the blood of Christ and made a child of God, it would be the greatest novelty that ever was known! I do not think it could be because it was never so seen in Israel."

Now listen to me. You say it was never so seen in Israel—how do you know that? It is highly probable that *you are making a great mistake* and

that there have been some saved who were quite as bad as you are, perhaps some who, in certain respects, were *worse than you*. What a splendid book might be made out of the records of the conversion of great sinners! The wildest romance is dull compared with the true history and mystery of the salvation of sinners! Whatever you may be, there is someone like you gone to Heaven. Though you are blacker than any other in the circle of your companions, yet there have been some who were blacker than you are who, nevertheless, have been washed whiter than snow and have been eternally saved. Do not persuade yourself into the conviction that it was never so seen in Israel, for great things have been seen in Israel, of which you know nothing.

But suppose that you speak the truth and are correct? Then, if it was never so seen in Israel, that is *no reason why it should not be so seen just now*. Because a thing has not happened, shall it never happen? The Israelites stood before the Red Sea and they might have said that a nation had never marched through the *sea*. Well, then, it was time that they should do so! And when God divided the waters, they went through the sea on foot and there did they rejoice in the might of Jehovah. Is not the Scripture full of the surprises of Grace—and has God changed? No, dear Friend, if this wonder has not happened yet, it is time that it should happen—and if it never has been so seen in Israel, I hope the hour has come when it shall be so seen in our midst! This which the multitudes said Israel had never seen, Israel did see, for the dumb man was delivered from the power of the devil and was enabled to speak the Savior's praise! And you, great sinner as you are, may become an instance of the surprise power of Divine Grace. It is time that it should be so!

Now let me ask you a question which may, perhaps, put an end to your belief that in your case this marvel cannot happen. *Are you beyond the limit of Divine Power?* Can God's Grace come, like the waves of the sea, right up to your feet and then shall some cruel voice say, "Up to this point shall you come, but no further"? Do you really believe that you are above the high-water mark of Divine Mercy? Will you just ponder this question over and think what a strange kind of man you must be? Neither the wandering Jew, nor any other fictitious character in the world of romance is so strange a creature as you—a man outside the limit of almighty love, one who has sinned beyond the boundary of Infinite Mercy—a sinner whom Christ's blood cannot wash! When you get to Hell, what a parade they will make of you! "Here is a man whom Christ could not save! He was willing to be washed, but Christ's blood could not cleanse him!" I fancy I hear you say, "Do not talk so, Sir—it is almost blasphemy." Why do you think so, then, if I may not say it? Why do you have the impudence to think that, after all, you are going to be master over Christ and that for once He will have to draw back and say, "This man has beaten Me. I cannot touch him. I cannot in any way soften, renew, or convert him"? You do not believe it—I am sure you do not! Get, then, out of this horrible falsehood of despair which is now upon you. If it was never so seen in Israel, believe that it may be so seen—and this very hour trust yourself with Christ and live!

Again, suppose it never was so seen in Israel. Suppose that you are the hardest sinner to save. Suppose that you are the most unlikely person to be forgiven. Suppose that your sins have well-near reached the limit of forgiving love. Well, now, here is a fine opportunity for Christ to show what He can do—*there is all the more room for the Glory of God's Grace to be seen.* Let me quote a text—"Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." Now here is an opportunity for the splendor of Divine Love to be seen in chasing away the midnight darkness of your sin and despair! Where are you, dear Sir, where are you? I am right glad to think that I am speaking to such a person, for, by-and-by, when you sit among the angels and sing to the praise of Free Grace and dying love, surely there will be no voice sweeter than yours!

I used to think that I should sing among the Saints above as loudly as any, for I owe so much to the Grace of God! And I once said so in a sermon, long ago, quoting those lines—

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace!"

I thought that I was the greatest debtor to Divine Grace and would sing the loudest to its praise. But when I came down out of the pulpit there was a venerable woman who said to me, "You made a blunder in your sermon this evening." I said, "I daresay I made a dozen, good Soul, but what was that particular one?" "Why, you said that you would sing the loudest because you owed most to Divine Grace. You are but a lad, you do not owe *half* as much to Grace as I do at 80 years of age! I owe more to Grace than you and I will not let you sing the loudest." I found that there was a general conspiracy among the friends, that night, to put me in the background. And that is where I meant to be and wished to be—that is where those who sing the loudest long to be—to take the lowest place and praise most the Grace of God in so doing!

Brother, if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell, there will be the more music in Heaven when they get you there and, at this moment, if you believe in Jesus, angels shall re-string their harps and new hallelujahs shall sound through the streets of Heaven when they see such a sinner as you washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb! "It was never so seen in Israel," well then, let it be so seen *now* to the praise of God's glorious Grace! "Ah," says one, "I do not think I shall ever be saved, for *the very devil is in me.*" Yes, but the devil's Master has come to turn him out. Only believe in Jesus and He will cast him out of you. "But he will not go out." Never you mind what the devil says about that matter! His Master can make him go out. The Omnipotent Jehovah knows of no power which is capable of standing against Him—

"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends
Who, who shall stop His hand?"

Almighty Grace can cast Satan out and keep him out, too. "Oh, but Sir, I do not feel as if I could pray. Oh, that I could pray!" But you *have* prayed—that was a prayer that you uttered. "I cannot pray, Sir, I wish I

could." You have prayed, already, that very *wish* is a prayer. "Sir, I cannot pray. I scarcely dare look up to Heaven." That confession that you dare not look up has in it the very essence of prayer! "But I cannot pray." Well then, *groan*. "But I can scarcely groan." Then, *desire*. "But I can hardly get to a desire." Then be wretched because you cannot desire! I do not exhort you to act like that—I only want to lead you away from your feelings or lack of feelings. If you wish to be saved, look to Jesus Christ right now, whatever you feel or do not feel! Whether you can groan, or pray, or do anything else, or cannot do anything else, look to Jesus! The only hope of a poor sinner is in Christ Jesus and Him crucified. As I have said already, He is the devil's Master and He, alone, can be your Savior. Cast yourself at His feet and He will not let you go! Lie before Him just as you are, in all the horror of your condition, and say, "Lord, look on me, for I look alone to You." Look, look, look to Jesus! Look and live!—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9.

Verse 1. *And He entered into a ship and passed over, and came into His own city.* Our Lord had given these Gergesenes an opportunity of becoming His disciples. The Kingdom of God had come very near to them, but as they accounted themselves unworthy of it and urged Him to depart out of their coasts, He did not force Himself upon them. Take heed, dear Friends, if you do but hear the Gospel, once, that you do not reject it, for you may never have the opportunity of hearing it again!

2. *And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.* He saw the faith of the one man who was brought to Him and also the faith of the four bearers who had let him down through the roof.

3, 4. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemes! And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts?* His knowledge of the *thoughts* of their hearts ought to have convinced them that He was Divine and that, therefore, He had the right to forgive sins. They were not, however, in a condition to learn *anything*, for they thought that they already knew *everything*.

5. *For what is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk?* Each of these actions needed Divine Power, but Divinity being present, there was no difference as to the manifestation of this power between the forgiveness of sins and the healing of sickness.

6, 7. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,* (*then He said to the sick of the palsy*), *Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. And he arose and departed to his house.* Carrying the mattress on which he had lain. Would he keep that bed sacred, do you think, for a memorial? Or if he used it in the future to sleep upon, would he not, by night, upon his bed wake up and praise the Lord for what He had done for him? I think that we should treasure up in our

memory the deeds of Christ on our behalf, if, indeed, we know His great salvation. I should not wonder if there is a mattress that you have somewhere at home—a bed, or a book—or something with which there is connected the remembrance of some deed of Infinite Love and Almighty Grace.

8. *But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power to men.* They did not think deeply enough and go really to the bottom of the matter, but they concluded that it was a wonderful thing that *any* man—that any *men*, as they put it—should have such power given to them.

9. *And as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.* Notice how Matthew describes himself—"As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom."

9. *And He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* See how everything is obedient to Christ? Paralysis leaves the palsied man and hardness of heart departs from the tax-gatherer.

10. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.* Note the modesty of these early recorders—Matthew does not say that it was his own house where this gathering took place, nor that he was the giver of the feast. Mark and Luke supply this information.

11-13. *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, He said to them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."* God prefers the doing of good to all outward ritual and ordinances, even the best of them—"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:"

13-22. *For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but your disciples fast not? So Jesus said to them, Can the children of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them and then shall they fast. No man puts a piece of new cloth to an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. While He spoke these things to them, behold there came a certain ruler and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Your hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.* See how He scatters mercy all around? He is charged to the full with the Divine electricity of

health and whoever comes in His way gets a blessing! Oh, for the Presence of that full and overflowing Christ in the midst of every worshipping assembly, for there are still many sick folk who need a Savior as much as these people did in the days of Jesus!

23. *And when Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise.* They were gathered together for the funeral of this young girl.

24. *He said to them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn.* They did not yet understand His expression—apparently sleep only differs from death in this respect—that the sleeper wakes, again, and returns to consciousness. The Lord Jesus Christ did not mean that the maiden was not dead—He meant that, as she was soon coming to life, again, it was, as it were, only like the *image* of death. To her, death was not a *cul-de-sac*, a dark cave without an opening at the further end—it was rather a tunnel through which she was passing back again into life.

25, 26. *But when the people were put forth, He went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And His fame hereof went abroad into all that land.* And well it might! This was the marvel of marvels that He could even raise the dead!

27. *And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us.* See, my Brothers and Sisters, how miracle follows upon miracle, how the way of Christ is, as it were, paved with mercy upon mercy?

28. *And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him and Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this?* It is a great thing to have faith about the particular point that most concerns us—"Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Some can believe everything except the one thing for which faith is most needed,

28. *They said to Him, Yes, Lord.* Can you, dear Friend, say, "Yes, Lord," about yourself?

29-31. *Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it to you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus charged them, saying, See that no man knows it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country.* This was very wrong of them, for they ought to have obeyed Christ's orders. They were doing much mischief, although, no doubt, they thought they were doing good. The Savior, first of all, was modest and did not wish His cures reported. In the next place, He wanted to have an opportunity of doing more good, but the reporting of this cure brought Him immense crowds who encumbered Him and also excited the animosity of the Pharisees who would the more persecute Him. Moreover, our Lord did not wish the Pharisees to think that He cured people that they might simply advertise Him. I think that we often err in imagining that making known every little thing that happens, and even every great thing, is the best course to pursue. There is a way of walking in wisdom toward them that are without—and Christ knew that way. And these blind man whose eyes He had opened should not have disobeyed Him.

32. *As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil.* "As they went out." Do notice what a succession of mercies Christ dispersed! It was a sort of tempest of blessing, peal upon peal, following almost without intermission!

33, 34. *And when the devil was cast out, the mute spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never seen like this in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils.* How does Christ answer this wicked taunt?

35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* That is the best answer to give to quibblers— do more good than ever! There is no stopping the barking of dogs, so go on your way, as the moon shines, let the hounds bay as they may. Oh, the glory of the Master! Like a cloud that dispenses showers of blessing wherever it moves, so did He continue to do His life-work.

36-38. *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then said He to His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you, therefore, to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.* Or, "that He will *thrust* forth laborers into His harvest." He who does the most is always the one who needs to see more done. This blessed Christ, with His hands so full of holy work, is the One who bows His knee and cries to the great Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into His harvest. Let us imitate Him both in the working and in the praying!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136 (SONG II), 537, 499.

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

THE OBJECTIVE OF CHRIST'S DEATH
NO. 2483

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 15, 1886.

"Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."
Galatians 1:4, 5.

THE Apostle Paul, in his writings, is notable for the fact that he scarcely ever mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ without pausing to praise and bless Him. There are many benedictions and hallelujahs in Paul's Epistles which might have been omitted so far as the run of the sense is concerned, but not one of them could be omitted because his heart was so aglow with love to his Divine Master that he only needed to mention that dear name and out burst his praises in a second! Brethren, let us all try to keep a heart like the Apostle's—so full of love to Christ that we have only to come across His track and we shall at once fall down and worship and adore Him or, upon the wings of holy love mount up nearer to His Throne.

I am quite sure that when Paul was writing the Epistle to the Galatians, he was eager to get at his task. The Galatians had turned aside from the Gospel of God's Grace and Paul was in dead earnest to bring them back to the grand Truth of the doctrine of salvation and justification by faith in Christ. He was burning to get at his work of trying to win them back to the old paths, but it seemed necessary and courteous to begin with a salutation. In that salutation occurred the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, so off went the Apostle! Earnest as he was to get to the special subject on which he was about to write, he felt that he must tarry a while and write a little to the honor of his Divine Master. So we read, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." Then He gets at the business he has in hand—"I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the Grace of Christ to another gospel: which is not another; but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ," and so on.

He is red-hot upon that subject, yet he must stop a minute or two to pen some few words of praise to his glorious Lord and Savior. The old proverb says, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." And to stop a little while, to praise and bless the name of Jesus Christ, hinders no man's argument! Whatever it is that you have to do, if your Master

shall cross your path, pause a while and praise Him as best you can. When Mary sat at Christ's feet, she was not wasting her time, she was employing it then to the highest possible profit! And when you and I get away from the Master's work to think of our Lord, Himself, and to praise Him and commune with Him, we are by no means wasting our time! We are gathering strength and laying it out to the best possible purpose with regard to our future work and warfare.

I can see the great wisdom of the Apostle in acting in such a fashion as this. He is about to write to these Galatians concerning their leaving the Gospel—what is the best way to make them sorry for turning aside from the faith? Why, to set before them Jesus Christ, Himself, who is the very essence and glory of the Gospel! I have heard of one who preached much against certain errors, but there was another servant of the Lord who never preached against those errors, but who always proclaimed the Gospel right out straight—and when one asked him why he did not attack the errors, he said, "I do preach against them most effectually. If there is a crooked stick about and you want to show how many crooks there are in it, you need not do anything except lay a straight one down by the side of it—and the crookedness of the other stick will be detected at once." So the Apostle admires, extols and adores the Lord Jesus Christ and thus, in the best possible manner, introduces what he has to say concerning the errors of the Galatians. Oh, for a burst of sunlight from the face of Christ! Then would the shadows of today soon fly away! They who have never seen Him may love modern novelties and falsehoods, but if they have beheld His face and have been won by His charms, they will hold that He who is the same yesterday, today and forever, is infinitely to be preferred to all the inventions of men! I could say no less than this when I noticed the position in which our text is placed.

But now let us come to the text itself. To my mind it contains four things. First, *what our Lord Jesus Christ aimed at with regard to His people*—"that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Secondly, *what our Lord has done to secure this end*—"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Thirdly, *why He did it*— "According to the will of God and our Father." And fourthly, *what we shall say concerning it*—"To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

I. First, then, WHAT DID OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AIM AT WITH REGARD TO HIS PEOPLE?

To preserve them from going down into the Pit? To rescue them from Hell? To bring them to Heaven? Yes, all that, but more than that! His great objective with regard to His people is to deliver them from this present evil world. We are living in this present evil world and, as Paul called it by that name, we need not alter the phrase, for we cannot help knowing that it is *still* an evil world. And in it are God's redeemed and chosen people, by nature part and parcel of that world, equally fallen, equally estranged from God, equally set on mischief, equally certain to go down into the Pit of destruction if left to themselves. The objective of Christ is to carve out a people from this great brook of stone—it is His purpose to find His own people who were given to Him before the earth was—and to deliver them from the bondage and the slavery in which they are found in

this Egypt, of which they seem to form a part, though to the eyes of Christ they are always as separate and distinct as the Israelites were when they dwelt in the land of Goshen.

What does the Apostle mean by saying that the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world?

First, Christ came that He might *deliver His people from this common condemnation of this present evil world*. This is the City of Destruction which is to be burned with fire and Christ's business is to fetch His people out of it. Therefore He sends His Evangelists to cry to them, "Flee from the wrath to come! Tarry not in the city, but escape for your lives—you are in a doomed world which will certainly be destroyed—therefore, flee to the only Shelter from the coming storm." The Lord desires that we should be so clear of this world that when it is condemned we may not share in the condemnation. It is Christ's purpose to bring us into a state of justification before God, through His blood and righteousness, that we may not perish in the common wreck in the day when the world shall be consumed with fire, but that we may have our ark wherein, as righteous Noah was preserved from the deluge of water, we may be saved from the fiery floods of Divine Wrath. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world that He might deliver us from that condemnation which now rests upon all the race of Adam except those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel.

But He came with this further purpose, *to deliver us from the condition in which the world is found*. In Paul's day the world was in a horrible state. Then the slave was chained to his master's door, like a dog, and slept at night in a hole under the stairs—and the slave's master indulged in all kinds of debauchery and sin. The cruelty of the Romans satisfied itself with gladiatorial shows where men murdered each other to make a public holiday. Christ came to gather out a people even from among these abominations—and He did gather them out—a holy people who could not and would not live as the rest of the world lived! They did not go away into the deserts, or hide themselves in caves, living as hermits, but they went up and down in the earth, attending faithfully to the duties of daily life, yet everywhere marked as differing from other men. Their moral tone—their whole thought about the things of this world and the next—was altogether different from that of the rest of mankind, for Christ had come to draw them out of the kennel of iniquity in which others lived like beasts, to lift them up out of the bog of sin and make them to be a pure-minded, holy, kind, generous, loving people who should be like their Master, Jesus Christ!

For this purpose, the Savior died. He thought it worth His while, even, to die upon the Cross that He might thereby make a better, purer, nobler, more unselfish, more devout people than as yet had appeared in the Roman or Jewish world. And this is what He is still doing in this present evil world! He is lifting up men and women out of the filthiness in which they have been wallowing—making them love holiness, purity, temperance—and hate all that is evil in the sight of God.

This, then, is the great objective of Christ's death—to deliver us from the world's condemnation, and to deliver us from the world's condition.

He also came *to deliver us from the world's customs*. There are many things which a worldling does which a Christian cannot do. I need not enlarge upon the tricks in trade which are all too common in the present day, but if you are Christ's own, I charge you, do not even *think* of them, but let your course be straight as an arrow's and let your conscience be clean as the driven snow! It is not for God's people to say, "It is the custom of the trade, so we may do it." What have you to do with that? It is the custom of the trade to ruin men's souls, but the Churches of God have no such custom, nor have those who follow closely after the Lord Jesus Christ. He has come on purpose that we may not conform to the sinful fashions of men, but that we may have a way of our own, or rather, that we may make Christ's way the way of holiness, to be our way.

Hence, He has come *to deliver us from the spirit of the world*. The spirit of the world is, "I can swim. So, if everybody else is drowned, there will then be the more room for me." "I fight for my own hand," says the worldling, "and if, in the process, I crush the widow and the fatherless, I cannot help that—they should not get in my way." The rules of political economy do not permit of anything like mercy—they are as inflexible as the laws of nature. They are something after this fashion—"Grind down the poor and get as much as you can out of them for as little money as possible. Care for nobody but yourself. Mind the main chance. Make money, honestly, if you can, but if not, make it anyway, only keep clear of the law, for it would be a mistake to fall into its clutches." Now, Christ has come to gather out of the world a people who will not be possessed with this detestable spirit, but who will resolve to live for others rather than for themselves. We are to consider those who are around us and to think what influence our conduct will have upon them. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to love even our enemies. We are to do good to the unthankful and to the evil. We are, in all ways, and according to the measure of our ability, to copy the example of our Father who is in Heaven, who makes His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the evil as well as upon the good. O Friends, look what Christ has come to do—even to separate to Himself a people like Himself out of this present evil world!

Yet once more, He will do this *by delivering us from all fear of this world*. What a great many of you there are who dare not do anything but what society agrees should be done! If society says, "This is the right thing to do," you call it "etiquette," and you do that particular thing. Then all the people around you are very respectable and you want to be counted respectable—and the consequence is that you dare not call your souls your own, and you do not act as you would wish to until you have first asked your neighbors' permission. There are multitudes of people still in the condition of abject slavery to those who are around them! But when Christ came into the world, He gathered out of the world a people who were not afraid of anybody. After His good Spirit had renewed them, they walked about fearless of the greatest earthly potentates! There was the great Emperor of Rome, for instance, and who dared ever contradict what the Emperor of Rome said? The man who wrote our text did!

And Paul before Nero is a vastly greater man than the cruel tyrant upon the throne. When they bring the saints before the judgment seat, the Roman consul says, "Offer sacrifice to idols. You know the law—take that incense and put it on the altar, this very moment." One of the guards says, "Sir, this man is obstinate and rebellious. I have told him what he is to do, but he refuses." The consul says, "Do you, impious wretch, refuse to worship Jupiter? Put that incense on the altar this moment, or you shall be torn in pieces with hot irons." The man before him replies, "I am a Christian." "Is that your answer?" "Yes, Sir, my only answer. I am a Christian." "Then tear him with the pincers! Let him learn what my hot irons can do." They do it and the brave saint bears it. Perhaps a groan escapes his lips, for flesh is frail, but when he is asked again, "Will you worship Jupiter?" He replies as before, "I am a Christian." "To the lions with him, then! To the lions with him," cries the enraged persecutor, and he is taken off to the amphitheatre. But as that poor simple peasant walks across the arena, the wild beasts, themselves, seem cowed before him and, though he is soon torn in pieces, everybody goes home from the amphitheatre saying, "What a strange being that man was! He seemed utterly devoid of fear!"

Yes, the early Christians were without fear and without reproach, for Christ came to set them free from fear of this present evil world.

O Brothers and Sisters, were the martyrs as brave as this, and are we going to yield to whatever laws and rules the world lives to lay down for us? Do we mean to believe its current theology, or philosophy, and do or not do as it may dictate? For my part, "I would as well not be as live to be in awe of such a thing as I myself." Since Christ has given me my liberty, I am His servant, and whether I am in fashion or out of fashion is no concern of mine so long as I please Him! Dear Friends, let it be so with you, I pray you, and may the Lord daily divide you more and more from the world so that, at home or abroad, everybody can see that you are not of the world! Love men, seek their good and in the highest and best sense be far more loving to the world than the world is to itself, but still, fear it not. Why should you? It is "the present evil world" which "lies in the Wicked One." It is for you bravely to bear your protest against the world every day you live, for to this end did Christ come to this earth, "that He might deliver us from this present evil world."

II. We have seen what our Lord aimed at by His death. Now, secondly, WHAT DID CHRIST DO TO THIS END—to deliver us from this present evil world?

The answer of the text is, "*He gave Himself*." I will not say that He gave His royal crown, that diadem which did outshine the sun. I will not say that He laid aside His azure vest and hung it on the sky as He came down to earth. I will not say that He gave up for us the thrones and royalties of Heaven. You know that He did all this and far more—nor need I remind you that, when upon earth, He gave up all that He had, even to His last garment, for they parted His raiment among them and for His vesture they cast lots. I need not say that He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, nor that He gave His hands to the nails and His feet to the cruel iron. I need not say that

He gave His body, His soul and His spirit, for you have it all in these three words—"He gave Himself."

"He gave Himself *for our sins*." That is the wonder of Christ's death! Our sins could not be put away except by His dying in our place. There was no expiation of our sin and, consequently, no deliverance from its condemnation except by Christ's bearing in our place, that wrath of God which was due to us—and He did it. "He gave Himself for our sins." I need not say more upon that point except just this. Do not, I pray you, let us permit Him in any sense or measure to fail in His supreme objective. "He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world," therefore, out of gratitude to Him, if for no other reason, let us not be of the world, or like the world, servants of the world, slaves of the world. What? Did Christ die to deliver us from the world and do we go back to it and deliberately put our necks under the world's yoke, wear the world's yoke and become, again, the world's slaves? I am ashamed of myself and of you whenever we, for a moment, act as the ungodly world acts and become as the world is—self-seeking, rebellious against God's will, living contrary to the Divine Law of Christ. Oh, let every drop of blood He shed on Calvary purge you from all resemblance to the world! Let the dying Savior's cries move you to hate the sin which the world loves! From Calvary, hear Him cry, "Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." By the blood with which He bought you, be you not of the world, seeing that He has redeemed you from among men that you might be altogether His own!

How does the death of Christ deliver us from the world? It does this *by removing from us the condemnation of our sin*. Having borne our sins in His own body on the tree, Christ has forever freed us from the penalty that was our due. You know that is the very essence of the Gospel and you also know that I preach this Truth of God every time I stand here, so I need not enlarge upon it now.

Christ has also delivered us from the world *by making sin hateful to us*. We say to ourselves, "Did sin kill Christ? Then we cannot play with that dagger that stabbed our Lord! How can we be friendly with the world that cast Him out and hanged Him on a tree? O murderous sin, how can I give you lodgment in my heart when you killed the Altogether Lovely One?" Men speak hard things of regicide, but what shall I say of *deicide*? And sin is that deicide which slew the Christ of God! Yet, marvel of marvels, by that death on the Cross He has crucified us to the world and the world to us and so He has delivered us from this present evil world!

I may add that Christ has also delivered us from the world *by the splendor of His example in giving Himself to die for His enemies* and by the Glory of His infinite merit whereby He purchased back that image of God in Adam which sin had obliterated. He gave Himself, the very image of God, and more than that, *God Himself*, that He might give back to us that image of God which long ago we had lost. Thus has Christ delivered us from this present evil world. Judge, Sirs, whether He has thus delivered you.

III. Time flies, therefore I must hasten on to the third question which is, WHY DID CHRIST DO THIS?

First, because our holiness was included in the purpose of God. The text says, "According to the will of God and our Father." Mr. Charles Simeon used to say that there were some, in his day, who thought that the very word, "predestination," sounded almost like blasphemy. And I have no doubt that there are some left who cannot bear to hear of the will and the purpose of God! But to us these words sound like sweetest music! I do not believe that there ever would have been a man delivered from this present evil world if it had not been according to the will, the purpose, the *predestination* of God, even our Father! It needs a mighty tug to get a man away from the world. It is a miracle for a man to live in the world and yet not to be of it—it is a continuous miracle of so vast a kind that I am sure it would never have been worked if it had not been according to the will of God our Father. Yet so it stood in the Divine Decree, that there should be a people chosen from among men—a people who would be called out from among the mass of the ungodly, who would be drawn by supernatural power to follow after that which is right and good and holy. A people who would be washed in the blood of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit in the spirit of their minds and, therefore, should be a peculiar people in the world but not of it—the people of God set apart to Himself, to be His, now, and His, hereafter forever and ever! I delight to remember that this is the will of God, even our sanctification, our separation from the world!

Now I want to push home this Truth of God into your very hearts. If this is, indeed, the purpose of God, let us see to it, my Brothers and Sisters, every one of us, that we *fulfill that purpose in our daily lives*. Let us come out from the world more clear and straight than we have ever done. I believe that there would be much more persecution than there is if there were more real Christians. But we have become so like the world, that the world does not hate us as it once did. If we would be more just, more upright, more true, more Christ-like, more godly, we would soon hear all the dogs of Hell baying with all their might against us! But what of that? It would just be the fulfillment of the Divine Purpose and God would be well pleased with us. Come, then, and let us fall back upon the Omnipotent strength which always slumbers within the Divine will. Lord, if it is Your will, fulfill it in me! If this is Your purpose, accomplish it in me! Oh, what brave men and women those early saints were! I do not wonder that our friend cried out, just now, when I depicted the martyr—but there were tens of thousands of such holy men and women in the days of persecution!

Have you never heard of her whom they set in a red-hot iron chair because she would not turn away from Christ, or of that other poor feeble woman who was tossed on the horns of bulls, but who, nevertheless, spoke up right bravely for her Master as she came to die? Yes, and there have been boys and girls, who, for Christ's sake, sooner than sin, have braved the most fearful deaths! Remember John Bunyan when he refused to give up preaching? They put him in prison and said to him, "Mr. Bunyan, you can come out of prison whenever you will promise to cease preaching the Gospel." He said, "If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the Grace of God." "Well," they said, "then you must go back to prison," and he answered, "I will go back and stay

there, if necessary, till the moss grows on my eyelids, but I will never deny my Master." This was the stuff of which the godly were made, then! May the Lord make many of us to be like they—men and women who cannot and will not do that which is evil, but will, in the name of God, stand to the right and the true, come what may!

IV. Lastly, WHAT SHALL WE SAY CONCERNING IT ALL? Why, just this, "To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

First, *God is glorified in Christ's death*. Has the Father given His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us? Then there is Glory enough in Jesus Christ upon the Cross to last throughout eternity! Fix your eyes upon that bleeding Savior—behold the glorious Justice of God in laying guilt on Him, punishing it on Him and behold, also, the inconceivable love of God in thus putting His Only-Begotten to death that we might live through Him! You need not range the world around to see the Glory of God in nature, though that is a delightful employment, for there is enough Glory in the Cross of Christ to last throughout all eternity. The Apostle says, "To whom be glory forever and ever." How long that is, I cannot tell. "Forever" is without any end, but Paul says, "Forever *and* ever," and there is Glory enough in the Cross of Christ to last forever and ever, as long as the Eternal Jehovah, Himself, exists!

Well, then, has Jesus Christ delivered us from the world? Have we fled to Him and been pardoned? Are we accepted in the Beloved? Then *let us begin to glorify God now*. Let us glorify His dear Son. Let us praise Him. Let every beat of our heart proclaim our joyous thankfulness and so continually yield sweet music to God. I would that every breath were like a verse of a Psalm and our whole life an endless hallelujah to His Glory!—

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

for it is, indeed, a subject of great praise to be separated from the world, and to be made holy to the Lord.

But, Brothers and Sisters, *when you once begin the music, never stop* because, as the Apostle says, Glory is to be given to God, "forever and ever." I saw, last week, a Brother from the backwoods of America, and he said to me, "Twenty years ago I was in your vestry and you did me much good by something that you said to me." I asked, "What did I say?" And the good man replied, "You said, 'Brother, as a minister, there are two occasions upon which you ought to preach Jesus Christ.' I enquired, 'What are those two occasions?' You answered, "In season and out of season.'" Well now, there are two occasions upon which we ought to praise God—"in season, and out of season!" Praise Him when you feel like praising and when you do not feel like it—praise Him till you do! When you can say—

"I feel like singing all the time,"

then sing! And when you say, "I do not feel like singing," make a point of singing just to let the devil know that he is not your master! It is a good thing to praise Christ in the presence of His friends. It is, sometimes, a better thing to extol Him in the presence of His enemies. It is a great thing to praise Jesus Christ by day, but there is no music sweeter than

the nightingale's—and she praises God by night. It is well to praise the Lord for His mercy when you are in health, but make sure that you do it when you are sick, for then your praise is more likely to be genuine. When you are deep down in sorrow, do not rob God of the gratitude that is due to Him—never stint Him of His revenue of praise whatever else goes short. Praise Him, sometimes, on the high-sounding cymbals—crash, crash—with all your heart and being. But when you cannot do that, just sit and give Him praise in solemn silence in the deep quiet of your spirit.

To be redeemed from a dying world, to be fetched out from a condemned world, to be brought out from slavery, to be made a child of God is enough to make you emulate the angels and even to excel them! They cannot rise to so high a pitch of gratitude as you ought to reach, even now, and ought to keep up all the days of your life—and then, "forever and ever" in the Presence of the King.

O you poor souls who are still in the world, God help you to get out of it! O you who are lost and ruined, there is no hope for you but in Jesus Christ our Savior! Tell all men about Him, Brothers and Sisters! You who are saved, talk about Christ everywhere! Let no man whom you ever meet be without a knowledge of the way of salvation. "I do not know what to say," says one. "I do not yet know much about it myself." Do not say it, then, if you do not know it! But, if you do know it, proclaim it! If you have tasted and handled it, proclaim it as best you can—in broken English, if in no other style—

"Proclaim to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found."

So, even through you the purpose for which Christ bled shall be accomplished, that is, the severance of His elect from the great mass of mankind among whom they lie, and this shall be to the praise of the glory of His Grace forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.

This matchless chapter contains that great intercessory prayer of Christ for His people which may most properly is called "the Lord's prayer."

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.* What a sight it must have been to see the Divine Intercessor in this, His last great prayer before He poured out His soul to death! We can never read this chapter so as fully to enter into its meaning, for there must always be in it a depth far greater than our experience can fathom. A man must die and enter Heaven before he can fully realize all that Christ meant when He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You."

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Notice the doctrine of this verse. Here is the mention, both of a general and a particular relation to Christ. "You have given Him power over all flesh." Never think of setting a limit to the value of Christ's atoning Sacrifice! Never dream that you can

understand all its influences and all its bearings. By His death, Christ has power over all flesh. But notice, also, the special purpose and objective of redemption. Observe how it applies particularly to the elect of God. The motive for the Father's giving Christ power over all flesh is this, "that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* The knowledge of God and the knowledge of the Messiah, the Sent One—this is not only life, but it is life that can never die—"This is life eternal." Have you, dear Friend, received this eternal life? Do you know the only true God? Do you know Jesus Christ whom He has sent? Then, at this very moment, you possess eternal life and you shall never perish, for eternal life is a life that cannot possibly die!

4, 5. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* This is such a prayer as never could have been prayed by a mere man and you cannot understand this prayer at all apart from the Manhood and the Deity of Christ combined. No human being could have written such a prayer as this even if it had been proposed to him to write a prayer that would be equally suitable to God and man. It is only suitable to Christ, the God-Man, and it is, in itself, one of the best evidences of the Inspiration of Scripture! I dare take my stand upon this chapter, alone, and say that here we have the finger of God, the writing of the Holy Spirit—and here we have the very Words of Him who was God and Man in one Person.

6. *I have manifested Your name to the men which You gave me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* How gracious it was on our Lord's part to say the best He could of His disciples! These 12 men had learned but little of the Divine Word, but they had believed what they had been taught, so Jesus could say of them to His Father, "Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word."

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given to them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* I want you to notice how the Lord Jesus Christ makes no boast of being "an original thinker." On the contrary, He says to His Father concerning His disciples, "I have given to them the Words which You gave Me." I would rather repeat the Word of God, syllable by syllable, than I would *dare* to think for myself apart from the revealed will of God! What are men's thoughts, after all, but vanity educed from vanity? But the Word of the Lord endures forever—it shall abide when even Heaven and earth shall pass away! Hence our Savior lays great stress upon this fact, "I have given to them the Words which You gave to Me." Brother minister, may you and I, when we come to die, be able to say to the Lord concerning our people, "I have given to them the Words which You gave to me."

9. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours.* In this, our Lord's last great intercessory prayer, He was especially engaged in petitions for His own people. There

is a sense in which He intercedes for all mankind, but in the higher and more special sense referred to in this verse, Christ's own chosen ones occupied all His thoughts—"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours."

10-11. *And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You.* Christ is God and, therefore, looking into the future, He can speak of His approaching departure as though it had already happened.

11. *Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* See the plaintive power of this prayer of a tender heart. First, our Lord shows His love by praying for us and then by dying for us. Notice what importance He attaches to the unity of His people—"that they may be one, as we are." Let us all try to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." I suppose that while we are in this world, we shall never all think alike, but let us all think alike about our Lord—and gather to His name and feel a holy unity through His Spirit! When shall it be again said that all Christ's disciples have "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism"? Alas, they tore His seamless robe and it still remains torn through the schisms and errors which divide His people, one from another!

12, 13. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You.* These are sweet Words with which to die. Oh, that you and I might have them in our hearts, if not on our lips, in our expiring moments! "And now come I to You." Our Lord thinks nothing of the bloody way by which He was to go to the Father. What though the Cross, nails and spear are in the road? He thinks comparatively little of all those terrible things, for He looks beyond them. And He says, "Now come I to You."

13. *And these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* Have you ever obtained this blessing, Brothers and Sisters—Christ's joy in you—what is more, Christ's joy *fulfilled* in you? God grant to all of us to know, by happy experience, the meaning of this wondrous expression!

14, 15. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* "Do not let the world so besmear and defile them as to do them mischief. Let them keep on as lamps burning in dark places. Take them not out of the world, but keep them from the Evil One."

16-18. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth. As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* As the Father took Jesus out of the bosom of His love and bade Him go as His missionary to men, so does Jesus keep us, for a while, away from the bosom of His Glory that we may stop here to be missionaries among our fellow men. Are we fulfilling our calling? Are we justifying the commission which Christ has laid upon us? Oh, that we were doing so to the fullest extent that is possible!

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself*—"For their sakes I set Myself apart."—

19, 20. *That they also might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these alone*—This little handful of followers gathered about Me—

20. *But for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.* In the glass of prevision, Christ saw us, my Brothers and Sisters, and He saw all the myriads, yet unborn, who are to be gathered to His Cross and to bow before His feet—and He prayed for them all—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word."

21, 22. *That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One.* Let us, more and more, lay aside everything that divides, especially that evil heart of unbelief, and pride, and self-seeking which is the great sect-making faculty. May we get rid of that evil and come more and more to realize that all men who are really in Christ are, and must be, one. If we are members of one body, one blood courses through our veins and gives us life! One Spirit is in the one body of Christ. There cannot be two lives. There cannot be two beings within the one body of Christ. All true Believers must be one and truly, if we speak the Truth of God to one another concerning our Lord—and especially if we speak much to God together in prayer—we straightway perceive that we *are* one!

23-26. *I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me. Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* Here the Master ended His sweet prayer and went off to His terrible passion in Gethsemane.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—387, 399, 580.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1886.

"A friend of publicans and sinners."
Luke 7:34.

THIS title was given to our Divine Lord and Master by those who were disposed to quibble at Him and were unwilling to be convinced that He was the Messiah. John the Baptist's self-denial was pushed much too far for them. They could not understand a man wearing a garment of camel's hair, with a leather belt about his loins and whose food was locusts and wild honey. The man was either too good for this world, or he was not in his right mind. "He has a devil," they said, as they turned away from him. But they could not say this of the Savior, for He ate and drank as others ate and drank, and made no difficulty at all about meats and drinks—so they said of Him—"He is a gluttonous Man and a winebibber—a friend of publicans and sinners." Thus our text comes to us as the language of certain gentry who said, even of the Savior, that they could not listen to Him because He seemed to be a Man who went in and out with ordinary people and did not distinguish Himself by being an ascetic.

I also heard a man say, some time ago, that he could not listen to a certain preacher because, unhappily for him, he happened to be very stout—he could profit by the ministry of a man who was very *thin*, for the objector thought he looked more saintly! Well, it may be so with some people, but, for my part, if anybody can do me good, whether he is stout or thin, I shall make no question about that matter! Whether he is an inch or two shorter or taller will not be a question for me to consider. I think that I should never refrain from consulting with an eminent physician because he happened to have black hair, or light hair, or any peculiarity of that kind! Yet people are often so indifferent about their *soul affairs* that the littlest trifle in a service, the tiniest accidental thing will often keep them from listening to the most weighty Truths of God that concern their immortal interests!

Now let us come to this title of our Master. They called Him, "a friend of publicans and sinners." It is somewhat noticeable that He quotes this saying Himself. Probably neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John would have told us that they called Jesus, "a friend of publicans and sinners" if He had not repeated it, Himself. It is clear from this fact that He was not in the least ashamed of the title! He repeats it almost as if He enjoyed it, as if He took the title home to Himself and wore it as some distinction which He was glad to have! He, Himself, says it and He takes

care to say it again and to bid both Matthew and Luke record it, that He was called, "a friend of publicans and sinners." What He was not ashamed to repeat, we are not ashamed to think of at this service! So, first of all, let us notice that *this saying, in the sense in which they meant it, was not true.* But, secondly, *in a higher and better sense than they understood it, it was true.* When we have thought over these two points, we will, in the third place, ask one another, *"Since it is true that Christ is a friend of publicans and sinners, what then?"*

I. First, then, IN THE SENSE IN WHICH THEY MEANT IT, THIS SAYING WAS NOT TRUE.

The Lord Jesus Christ was *not* "a friend of publicans and sinners" *in the sense of being in the least like them.* Our proverb says, "A man is known by the company he keeps," but you could not have known the Lord Jesus Christ by the company *He* kept. It would be strictly true to say of Him that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners"—that even when He was present with them and received them, and ate with them—yet still there was a grave distinction between Him and them so that you could never consider Him to be of the same class with them. No, Brothers and Sisters, His bitterest enemies could not truly lay any sin to His charge! They had to hire false witnesses to make up an accusation against Him and when they had made it up, there was really nothing in it. The quick-eyed prince of this world, Satan, himself, could find nothing sinful in Him. And the princes of this world, whose eyes, through their malice, had become like the eyes of lynxes, yet could not discover anything for which they could blame Him. He was not like they were. He was not like any sinner, He was not like the drunkard, He was not like the adulterer, He was not like the thief, nor was He in the least like the hypocritical Pharisee who, with all his attempts to appear righteous, was not really like the Savior. So, Christ was *not* "a friend of publicans and sinners" in the sense of being like they were.

And, in the second place, He was not "a friend of publicans and sinners" *in the sense of aiding or abetting them in evil.* He never said a single word that could encourage any man to sin. He never did a single act by which any man would have said that he was helped to be a transgressor. I do not suppose that any other man ever lived who could be truthfully said to be harmless, for all of us do *some* harm, even if unconsciously. Our example, either in its defects or in its excesses, must be injurious to *somebody.* Even those who endeavor to keep their example as pure, clean and worthy of imitation as possible, yet, perhaps, sometimes lose their temper, or occasionally speak unadvisedly with their lips, or, now and then forget what they ought to have remembered and thus incidentally do harm. But our Lord Jesus Christ never did. No one among us here was ever led by the example of Christ to do harm. His example is matchless in this respect that if we copied it as far as it is imitable, we would only have copied *perfection* and followed on after the highest virtue! There may be some who join with publicans and sinners, so eating and drinking with them as to encourage gluttony and drunkenness—so singing and laughing with them as to multiply wantonness and uncleanness—but this could never be said of the Savior. He was not like they

were nor did He aid them, so He was not, in that sense, a "friend of publicans and sinners."

And, furthermore, *He never uttered principles which would encourage persons in sin*, or which would help their consciences to be quiet while they indulged their vices. Alas, in modern times there have been some who, even from the pulpit, have taught men that sin is a trifle and, with regard to the future state, they have either denied its existence, or have tried to make it so pleasant to the ungodly that it seems if you followed the preacher's leading, you might as well die impenitent as fall asleep a Believer in Jesus! They have either denied that there is any wrath to come, or they have smoothed it over and made the descent to the Pit to be *pleasant* to men. This is setting a trap to catch men's souls—but Christ never did that. Such as He loved the sinner, He denounced his sin and proclaimed the judgment to come in words most striking and terrible! Where can you find, in all the books you may read—even in the writings of those mediaeval preachers which are so generally condemned, or in the works of those old-fashioned Puritan preachers who are so sneered at, nowadays—words that equal in their crash of terror the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ? O Sirs, if you do not care to read the Epistles, read the records of the four Evangelists and note what Jesus said! He never made the way of sin to appear pleasant, nor tried to minimize the dread result of iniquity. No, He was not, in that sense, "a friend of publicans and sinners." He was a better friend to them than He would have been if He had acted like that! He dealt more honestly with them and did not smooth their path with flatteries.

And once again, Jesus was not "a friend of publicans and sinners" *in the sense that He ever courted popularity among them*. Many of them would have taken Him by force and made Him a king, but He hid Himself from them. They "drew near to Him for to hear Him," but He never said a single syllable to pander to their depraved tastes, or to ease them in their consciences while continuing in their sins! He aimed at winning their souls, but not at winning their applause. I heard of one who, at the election, advertised himself as, "the friend of the working man." I daresay the working man would find it difficult to discover any particular friendship in him, now that he has become a Member of Parliament! It is very easy to profess to be a friend of anybody when there is something to be gained by it! But our Lord and Savior had nothing to get out of those He met while here on earth. He had everything to *give* to them and He *did* give all that He had, yes, and Himself, also! But He never cajoled them, or sought their friendship, that He might win their acclamations. So it was not true that He went about among men trying to ingratiate Himself with the lowest of the low and the vilest of the vile. Nothing of the kind! Christ always stands out before us as the advocate and pattern of everything that is pure, true, right and noble, so that, *in the sense intended by these quibblers*, He was *not* "a friend of publicans and sinners."

II. But now, dear Friends, I have a much more pleasant matter to speak of when I say that IN A HIGHER AND BETTER SENSE, THIS SAYING WAS TRUE and it is *still* true that Jesus Christ is "a friend of publicans and sinners."

He was, first of all, *a most hearty and affectionate friend to guilty men*. His whole soul was filled with love to men while they were yet sinners and enemies to Himself. It was this that made Him leave His Father's court and all the royalties of Heaven to come and be born in a stable, and laid in a manger—and to labor in a carpenter's shop and to become the poorest of the poor and the most despised and rejected of men! All this was because He loved men, not only as men, but as *guilty* men. Their guilt excited His pity, for He knew the misery which lies concealed behind the apparent pleasure of sin. And to deliver guilty men from the consequences of their sin, He came to live where He could not have a place to lay His head, where, at the last, He did not even have a garment with which to cover His naked body! Our Lord Jesus was a truly sincere, intensely affectionate, earnest Friend—never before or after did any man have a nature so intensely affectionate as had the Lord Jesus Christ! He always seems to me as if He combined in His blessed Person both the sexes of our common humanity, as if He were the perfection of all that can be found in man and woman, too—so tender and so gentle, and yet so strong. The masculine, with all its force, and the feminine, with all its gentleness and sympathy, were united in Christ! He never thought of sinners without love, never looked at them without pity, never heard their cruel words without returning them good wishes, never saw their miseries without being moved with compassion. He was a model of gentleness such as you and I may well desire to imitate, but shall never reach. He was "a friend of publicans and sinners" in the intense affection of His heart.

You need not wonder, therefore, that I add, in the next place, that He was "a friend of publicans and sinners" *in a very practical manner*, for intensity of heart is sure to bring forth fruit. Tell me that you love me and it will come to very little if you only love me in words. But if there is true love, there will be corresponding *action*, there will be *proofs* of that affection. Our Savior proved His love to men in His very coming to this earth, as I have already said, but when He was here, He went about doing good. He never was invited to do good to any and refused, however lowly—and, let me add, however polluted they might be, they were always welcome to His benediction. He went about preaching the Gospel which could elevate those who were fallen and comfort those who were despairing and, at the last, He proved His love in the highest conceivable manner. If a good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep and, in doing so, was proved to be good, did not Jesus do so? Let me quote those blessed words of the Apostle Peter—there is more music in them than in all Homer's poetry—"Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." That we might live, He died! That we might be cleansed from our iniquities, the Lord has laid them all on Him! O Sinners, Christ is, indeed, your Friend, since, by His death, He has already done for you all that Almighty Love could suggest and Omnipotent Love could carry out! Yes, and rising from the grave and mounting to His Throne, He made intercession for the transgressors and He continues to prove His love to sinners by daily pleading for them! The prayer He commenced on earth has never closed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, yes, He is in-

tensely, deeply affectionate within Himself, but He is abundantly and practically the Friend of sinners by what He does for them! How I wish that some of you would prove this by going to Him, that He might exercise upon you all the matchless skill of His inimitable Grace!

Further, Beloved, I call your attention to this fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Friend of sinners *in the wisest possible sense*. He is affectionate and practical, but He is also wise. You know that there are several ways of proving yourself a man's friend. There is a man who calls upon one whom he regards as his friend and he says, "Friend, I need you to give me some drink." And his friend says to him, "There is the bottle—take as much as you like." A man who acts like that is only worthy to be called a foe! The poor fellow has another friend upon whom he calls and, to his request, his other friend replies, "I cannot give you strong drink, for I believe that it would greatly injure you. I look upon it as a mischievous thing and I am afraid the habit of drinking is growing upon you. Excuse me, but I cannot give it to you." I think you will all agree that this last is much the wiser friend! I know persons to whom, if you go and hint to them what advice you would like them to give you, they will give you that advice, directly. When people come to me to ask for advice, I generally know that they have made up their minds as to the advice I am to give them and, if they find that I advise what they wish, they think me very wise! A wise friend knows that though he might ingratiate himself for a moment by giving congenial advice, yet, by-and-by, when it turns out for evil, he would have done his friend an ill turn and would be blamed for having done so. The wise friend often throws cold water on our plans and says, "You are quite wrong," although we would have wished him to have said, "You are right."

The Lord Jesus Christ is such a wise Friend that He says to the sinner, "Come, Friend, if you would be happy, you must give up that sin." He does not say, "I will be your friend and help you through the scrapes into which you have got through your sin." "No," says Christ, "I will help you *out* of your sin if you will trust Me, but if you will keep your sin, you will have to smart for it and I will not help you out of that sorrow." He comes to you, my dear Friend, and He says, "You want to be happy, but that is not the most important point—you must first be *holy* before you can be happy." "O Lord Jesus!" says the sinner, "I want peace." "No," says Jesus, "you do not need peace—it would be injurious to you to have peace in your present condition—you must have, first, *purity*. I must, first of all, show you where you are wrong and set you right." As He does it, sometimes we cry out, "It is very rough treatment, Lord!" I have known, in cases of surgery, that a patient has been very anxious for the healing of the wound. "No," says the skillful surgeon, "not yet. There is much proud flesh which must first be taken away. We must not close this wound yet. It must be left open, for there is much that must still come forth from it if we are to have a permanent cure." Thus does the Lord Jesus Christ often deal with sinners. He is their true Friend even when He lays the axe to the root of their tree of self-righteousness and begins to cut it down! He means to make sure work and abiding work, so He bids the sinner renounce his sin, repent of his transgressions and

seek that complete change of heart which will produce a radical change of life. Christ is "a friend of publicans and sinners" in a very wise sense.

And, Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is "a friend of publicans and sinners" *in a very intense sense*. There is an old proverb which says, "A friend in need is a friend, indeed." Christ is the Friend of sinners in their time of need. You, Sir, have gone on in profligacy and extravagance till you are brought to beggary. Yet even now you may come to Christ! You have ruined your health by sin, yet you may still come to Christ! Possibly you have even disgraced your character by some overt crime, yet you may come to Christ and Christ will come to you! "Oh, but nobody speaks to me!" *He* will speak to you! He will find you alone in your shame and will speak words of saving power to you. Do I address some poor woman who has lost her character and is shunned by everybody? Jesus Christ comes even to you as you stand alone and He says, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more." The Lord Jesus likes to catch us when we are down at our very lowest. When others say, "Now he is down, keep him down," Christ says, "Now he is down, up with him!"

There is a story told about the Savior. I do not suppose that it is true, but it ought to be, for it is just what might have happened. It is an old tradition that one day, in the streets of Jerusalem, there lay a dead dog and one kicked the body and said that it had the mange. Another kicked it and said, "How its bones stick out! What a cur it is!" But there came One who stood by this dead dog and said, "What white teeth it has!" He had spied out the only good thing that could be found in the dead dog and, as He went on His way, the people asked, "Who was that?" And others answered, "It was Jesus of Nazareth." As I have said, I do not suppose that story is true, yet it is just as Christ would have acted and that is the way He does with people—He spies out some good thing or other, if there is any in them—or if there is no good thing in them, He still loves them till He loves them into goodness! He knows the blessed art of getting hold of people at their worst and then and there putting into them some point of brightness of character which delivers them from being utterly cast away! My blessed Master likes picking sinners off the very dunghills of sin! How many poor captives has He fetched from prisons and set them free! How many has He gathered whom the devil, himself, had cast away as worn-out and good for nothing! These are the very persons that He takes and makes to be His beloved ones, who shall wash His feet with their tears and wipe them with the hairs of their head. Yes, Christ Jesus is a Friend of great intensity for He is a Friend in need.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Friend of sinners *for constancy*. He is the friend of the sinner when he begins his sin and He checks him. He is the Friend of the sinner when he goes on in his sin and He warns him. He is the Friend of the sinner when he has grown old in sin and still He holds him back. He is the Friend of the sinner when the sinner gets to be, as it were, farthest gone of all—not only ripe, but rotten! Still does Jesus follow him—the wonderful perseverance of Divine Mercy is a theme that may well excite the marvel of angels! O Sirs, I wish you who have gone far into sin could but feel that still, in His pity, He looks upon you and still, in His love, He pursues you! He is, indeed, the Friend of sin-

ners! You wrote "sinners" in very small letters, once, and then you might have written, "friend," in equally small letters. But now you write in large capitals—"SINNERS." Oh, what a size the letters would be if they truly described you! But larger than all is that blessed word, "FRIEND." As you seem to grow in sin, He seems even more to grow in *friendship* and so you sing to Him—

"Still does Your good Spirit strive—
With the chief of sinners dwell."

Oh, that He would lead you to believe this even now, so that you might fly into His arms! He is the Friend of sinners for His constancy.

I have nearly exhausted my time, so I can only say, my Lord Jesus is the Friend of sinners *in the largest conceivable sense*. There never was a sinner to whom He was not willing to be a Friend! If you, poor Sinner, will but seek Him, He will be found of you. In a revival, perhaps, there may be hundreds coming to Christ—do not think that you will be one too many. And in dull times there may seem to be *none* coming to Christ—do not think that He will refuse you because you are a lonely one! Where do you dwell, my Hearer? Perhaps on some lone moor, or in some far-away glen, or out in the bush—yet Christ is there—so seek Him in the silence of the evening. Or do you work in the midst of the busy city where all is noise and turmoil? Yet He will hear you amidst the hum of labor and the din of traffic—your whispered prayer will reach His ear and heart—

"Jesus sits on Zion's hill,
And receives poor sinners still,"

and that at all hours of the night and all moments of the day! If He should refuse you when you go to Him, you will be the first whom He ever refused—and I am sure He will not begin with you! That cannot be, for Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He also said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." No, that will never be your case nor mine, Beloved, if we come to Him! It is impossible! So let us rejoice that throughout all time, as long as there is a sinner out of Hell, Christ is ready to be that sinner's Friend!

III. So I shall close my discourse when I have asked and answered one more question, AS CHRIST IS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS, WHAT THEN?

Well, first, let us do as the sinners used to do in His time, *they drew near to Him*—"Then drew near to Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." There is a great crowd of people—what a dense throng! Who is that in the middle? It is Jesus of Nazareth, the great Messiah Prophet preaching! Who are those gentlemen standing on the edge of the crowd, wearing broad phylacteries, discussing among themselves and sneering at the doctrine that is being taught? Those are the very respectable people who never do anything wrong—the Scribes and Pharisees—the learned men who know all that can possibly be known by anybody! These people always stand at the very outside of the ring. But who are those in the middle of the throng? And, straightway, some Pharisee holds up his hands in disgust and says, "It is perfectly shocking! Wherever the Nazarene goes, there is always a pack of the riff-raff round Him! Whenever He speaks, you notice that He is surrounded by a lot of tax-gatherers—the scum employed to gather the money for the Romans—for no Jew would do that unless he was very far gone. Do you not see that there is one of

them close to His side just now, listening to Him, and the tears are running down his checks? That is the kind of wretch to whom He preaches! And see that woman over there, that is the style of His hearers."

Now, why did men and women of that kind always get so close to Christ? It was because they felt that He was their Friend. No, Rabbi Simeon, they will never come round *you*, so you need not trouble yourself upon that point. You can gather up your skirts and go home. They will not offend you by getting too close to your heels, for you are no friend of theirs. They know that and, somehow, sympathy draws people, while coldness repels them. I pray the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise that drawing influence over you, my dear Friends. Knowing that you are sinners, come and listen to the sinners' Friend. Read the writings of the four Evangelists and see what He has said to you—and whenever His Gospel is preached, or anything is said about Him—try to understand it and accept it. You will do so if you are wise.

Next, not only draw near to Him, but *test Him as often as need arises*. There is nothing like putting Christ to the test! In a side street, not far from here, you may have seen in a window this notice, "If any poor girl upon the streets desires to escape from her sinful way of living, she will find a friend inside." I felt very pleased when that notice in the window was pointed out to me and I think that if I were a poor girl in that sad case, and wished to escape, I would go inside to see what the friend could do for me. The Lord Jesus Christ has put in His window a message of this kind, "Any sinner of any sort who desires to be saved, let Him come to Me." Now, do not merely stand at the window and read it, but come inside, my poor Brother! Come inside, my Sister! Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus just now!

To get at Him, there is only this to be done—*just trust Him.* Trust Him implicitly, wholly, solely. Trust Him now. When you trust Him, then you are saved, for it is written, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." If you have trusted Christ, you have everlasting life! That act of faith proves that everlasting life has dropped into your bosom and that Christ has said to you, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Go, and sin no more."

When you have trusted Christ and proved Him to be your Friend, *proclaim to others what you know of Him*. Whisper it about. You will find some more poor sinners who will be glad to hear the good news! You remember the dog at the hospital that went of his own accord and had his broken leg set—and then he went again with another broken-legged dog? He was a sensible animal and oh, let every poor soul that has received Christ go and find another soul and bring him to Christ! In the depth of winter, at a time when I had a balcony to my study, I put some crumbs out upon it and there came a robin redbreast, first, and he pecked and ate all he could. I do not know his language, but I fancy I can tell what he said, for he went away and came back with ever so many sparrows and other birds! He had said to them, "There are crumbs up here, come and get them." And they all came and they came in greater numbers every day—and I do not know how it was except that they told one another. One day, whether it was the robin or the sparrows, I do not know,

but some of them told a blackbird and he was a bigger fellow than any of them. When he came, he stood near, for I should think, a minute, and then he spied me inside and flew away, for he thought, "That good man does not like blackbirds." But he did not know me! I was pleased to see him and I should have liked to see a lot of such birds. So the robin went up to him and told him that he had been there for the last three or four days and I had never even threatened him. And, after being persuaded a little, the blackbird came back and the robin seemed to me to be quite pleased to think that he had converted this fellow and brought him back, for they dropped down together on the crumbs, and they had such a joyful feast that they came again and again!

Oh, there are some of you, dear robin redbreasts, that have been here ever so long and have been eating my Master's crumbs! You have brought some sparrows to the feast—now try to entice a blackbird and if there is one blackbird bigger and bleaker than another, go and fetch him and bring him, for Jesus says that He will cast out none that come to Him by faith—and you may be sure that it is true, for He is "a friend of publicans and sinners." God bless you all, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 7:24-50.

Verse 24. *And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak to the people concerning John. What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?* Certainly not! John could never be compared to a reed shaken by the wind, for he was strong, sturdy, firm and steadfast. He was not like so many preachers, nowadays, who are swayed by the ever-changing opinion of the age—the thought of these modern times—and so prove themselves to be mere reeds shaken by the wind.

25. *But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment! Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.* John had been preaching in the desert with all his might, warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. He was no court preacher, but a minister to the multitude, who delivered his Heaven-Inspired message in his own straightforward earnest style.

26, 27. *But what did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a Prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, which shall prepare Your way before You.* John was the morning star and Christ the glorious Sun! John was the herald proclaiming the coming of Christ and Christ, Himself, followed close at his heels!

28. *For I say to you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist.* His was the highest office of all, immediately to precede Messiah, Himself.

28. *But he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* We have a fuller Gospel to preach than John had and we may expect to see greater results from the preaching of that Gospel than John could hope to see.

29-32. *And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, Unto what, then, shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling, one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not wept.* These children could not agree as to what game they would play. "Come," they said, "let us imitate a wedding. We will pipe and you can dance." But the others would not dance. "Well," they said, "let us play at *something*. Let us imitate a funeral—we will be the mourners." Then the others would not weep. They would agree to nothing that was proposed and that is the point of the Savior's analogy—that there are multitudes of men who always quarrel with any kind of ministry that God may send them. This man's style is much too ornate—he has a superabundance of the flowers of oratory. That other man is much too dull—there is nothing interesting about his discourses. This man is too coarse—he is so rough as even to be vulgar. That other man is too refined and uses language which shoots over people's heads. It is easy to find fault when you want to do so. Any stick will do to beat a dog and any kind of excuse will do to allow your conscience to escape from the message of an earnest ministry. Our Lord told the people that this was the way they had acted towards Himself and John the Baptist.

33. *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine*— An ascetic of ascetics—

33. *And you say, he has a devil.* "He is out of his mind altogether, possessed by the devil."

34. *The Son of Man is come eating and drinking*—That is the Lord Jesus, Himself. He comes as a Man among men, and sits with you at your feasts, and does not lead the life of an ascetic.

34. *And you say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!* There was no pleasing them either way! Whichever form of preacher the Lord sent, whether an ascetic or one like themselves, they found fault.

35. *But wisdom is justified of all her children.* There shall come a day when it shall be seen that, after all, God knew best what style of preacher to send. He had work for each man to do and He adapted the man for the work He had entrusted to his charge.

36. *And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat.* Invitations from Pharisees were rather scarce—they did not often ask Christ to their houses. Even before this meal is over, there will be sure to be something like a quarrel, depend upon it!

37. *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner*—Her name is not given and there are good reasons why it should not be given. Certainly she was not Mary, the sister of Lazarus, nor Mary Magdalene, we may be quite sure of that. Our Savior leaves her in an anonymous condition and it is usually best that converts of this character should not be exhibited and their names made known. I believe that much cruel wrong

has been done to reclaimed sinners when they have been pushed to the front. "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner."—

37, 38. *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him, weeping*—His feet probably lay towards the door as He reclined at the table. And she could readily get at them without becoming too conspicuous in the room—she "stood at His feet behind Him, weeping."—

38. *And began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.* What a blessed amalgam of humility, penitence, gratitude and love! All these are seen in what she did, especially in that unbinding of the tresses of her beauty which had been her nets in which she had taken the souls of men. Now she uses these for a towel. She "began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

39. *Now when the Pharisee which had bid Him, saw it, he spoke within himself*—He did not like to say it in so many words, but he spoke loud enough for himself to hear it and for Christ to hear it, too.

39-44. *Saying, This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said to him, You have rightly judged. And He turned to the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman?* "You did see this woman and you looked upon her with a frowning face. Now take another look at her by the light of My parable." "Simon, Do you *see* this woman?"

44. *I entered into your house*—"Therefore you were bound by the obligations of a host."—

44. *You gave Me no water for My feet.*—An ordinary commonplace courtesy in the East, almost a necessity for those who have walked far and whose feet are weary and dusty—"You gave Me no water for My feet."—

44. *But she has washed My feet with tears*—Costly water this! "She has washed My feet with tears."

44. *And wiped them with the hairs of her head.* "She has done it, she has done it better than you would have done it! She has done it best of all—she has done what you ought to have done—she has done it when there seemed to be no claim upon her to do it."

45. *You gave me no kiss.*—Though that was the ordinary mode of salutation to an honored guest—

46. *But this woman, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.* "You said in your heart that if I had been a Prophet, I would have known who and what manner of woman this was. I do know and I am telling you. If you had given Me a kiss, you would only have coldly kissed My brow, but she has found it in her heart to honor Me by kissing My

feet. Since I came in, she has not ceased to kiss them, unwashed as they were, and she has not only kissed them, but she has also washed them with her tears."

46. *My head with oil you did not anoint*—"You, the host, whose duty it was to anoint the head of your guest, did not do it."—

46. *But this woman has anointed My feet with ointment.* The best oil she possessed or could procure.

47, 48. *Therefore I say to you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said to her, Your sins are forgiven.* "Not because she has done this, but this is an *evidence* that her sins are forgiven. This act of greater love is the proof that she must be conscious of the greater forgiveness—'she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.'" It is always like that! Your converted Pharisees have to be made to feel like this woman before they will render love like hers. And if Simon is ever made to feel that his sin, in a certain light, is as great as the sin of this fallen woman, then he will love as much as she does, but not till then. Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Oh, the marvelous music of that short sentence! If I had to choose from all language the choicest sentence that my ears could hear when under a sense of sin, it would be these four words which the Master addressed to this woman who was a notable public sinner, "Your sins are forgiven."

49. *And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that also forgives sins?* Now, you see, they begin to mutter and to quibble. What is this poor woman to do? Probably she felt ready to speak up for her Master, but, sometimes, it happens that the Lord Jesus Christ will not permit certain, even of His forgiven ones, to be very prominent.

50. *And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* She was best out of the way of all controversy. She would honor Him most by going home and there sweetly singing to His praise and drinking deep draughts of His love. If any of you converts are meeting with those who laugh at you, do not stop where they are, but go about your business with these sweet words of your Master ringing in your ears—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 568, 499.

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

LOVE'S VIGILANCE REWARDED
NO. 2485

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 4, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1877.

"Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found Him whom my soul loves. I held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him to my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Song of Solomon 3:4.

WHEN I look upon this great assembly of people, I think to myself—there will be many here to whom these chapters that we have read out of Solomon's Song will seem very strange. Of course they will, for they are meant for the inner circle of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! This sacred Canticle is almost the central Book of the Bible. It seems to stand like the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden of Eden, in the very center of the Paradise of God. You must know Christ and love Christ, or else many of the expressions in this Book will seem to you but as an idle tale.

The subject on which I am about to speak will be very much of the same character. Outsiders will not be able to follow me, but then we are coming to the Communion Table so I must, for a while, forget the unsaved among my hearers, and think only of those who *do* know the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. To my mind, it is a very melancholy thought that there should be any who do not know the sweetest thing in all the world, the best and happiest thing beneath the stars—the joy of having Christ in their heart as the hope of Glory! While I may seem to forget you, dear Friends, for a while, I cannot really help remembering you all the time and it is the earnest desire of my heart that while I am speaking of some of those delights which are enjoyed only by the people of God, you may begin to long for them—and I remind you that when you truly long for them, you may rest assured that you may have them! Around the garden of the Lord there is no wall so high as to keep out one real seeking and trusting soul—and in the wall, itself, there is a gate that always stands ajar—no—that is always *wide open* to the earnest seeker.

I am not going to try so much to preach a sermon as to talk out freely from my heart some of those delightful experiences which belong to the children of God. I want this service to be a time not of carving meat, but of eating it—not of spreading tables, but of sitting at them and feasting to the full on the bounteous provisions that our Lord has prepared for us.

I. First, before we actually come to our text, we may notice THREE PRELIMINARY STEPS IN THE SPOUSE'S PROGRESS.

The first one is implied in the words, *"I love Him."* She refers to her Beloved under the title of, "Him whom my soul loves." Can you, dear Friend, give the Lord Jesus that title? If He were to come here just now as He came to the Lake of Galilee and pass along these crowded ranks and say to each one of us, "Do you love Me?" what would be your answer? I am glad that I speak to many whose answer would be, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." I can at this moment think of many reasons why I should love the Christ of Calvary, but I cannot think of *one* reason why I should *not* love Him. If I turn to what I read about Him in this blessed Book, it all makes me love Him. If I recall what I have experienced of His Grace in my heart, it all makes me love Him. When I think of what He is, what He did and what He is doing, and what He will yet do—it all makes me love Him! I am inclined to say to my heart, "Never beat again if you do not beat true to Him." It were better for me that I had never been born than that I should not love One who is, in Himself, so inconceivably lovely—Who is, indeed, perfection's self!

Yet there is one reason that rises above all others why you and I should love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." It used to be said by the old metaphysicians that it was impossible for love not to be returned in some measure or other. I do not think that statement is universally true, but I hope it is true concerning our Lord's love to us and our heart's love to Him. If He has loved us with an everlasting love. If He loved us even when we were His enemies and loved us so as to take upon Himself our *nature*—if this dear Son of God loved us so that He became Man for our sakes and, being found in fashion as a Man, humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross—oh, then, we *must* love Him in return! We would be worse than the beasts that perish if, conscious of such love as this, we did not feel that it melted us and that, being melted, our soul did not bow down in love to Him, alone! Can you stand at the foot of the Cross and not kiss the feet of Him who was wounded for your transgressions? Can you see Him dead and taken down from the Cross—and not wish to wrap Him in your fine linen—and bring your sweet spices to embalm His precious body? Can you see Him risen from the grave, and not call Him, "Rabboni," and long, as Mary did, to hold Him by the feet? Can you, by faith, see Him in our assemblies saying, "Peace be to you," and not feel that you delight in Him in your inmost soul? It cannot be! Surely, it cannot be! We must and will say, and we feel that we may appeal to the Searcher of all hearts while we say it, "I love Him, I *do* love Him because He first loved me."

Then, in the spouse's progress, there came another step, *"I sought Him."* Notice how the chapter begins—"By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves," for love cannot bear to be at a distance from the Loved One. Love longs for communion, love will do *anything* to get at the object of its affection. Where there is true love to Jesus Christ, we cannot bear to be away from Him and since we must be so, from His Presence, for a while—till the day breaks and the shadows flee away—we long to be with Him in heart and to feel that He is also with us in spirit according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

"I sought Him." Can you put your finger on that sentence and say, "That is true, too"? Have you been seeking Him this Sabbath? Are you coming to His table, tonight, seeking Him? Were you at the Saturday night Prayer Meeting, or at this morning's early gathering, seeking Him with His people? Or, in your private devotions, did you make a point of crying, "Lord, let me meet with You, let me find You"? If not, begin now! Seek Him with your whole heart! Let your soul breathe out its burning desires after Him.

"I sought Him." He is not far from any of us. You sought Him once, when you were burdened with your sin, and then you found Him. He cast that sin of yours into the depths of the sea. Come and seek Him, again, and your fears, your doubts, your distresses of mind shall be buried in the same deep grave!

So the spouse sings of her Beloved, "I sought Him."

Then comes in a little minor or mournful music, for the next clause is, "I sought Him, *but I found Him not*." The spouse is so sad about it that she tells of her woe twice, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." Do you know that experience? I hope you are not realizing it at this time, but many of us have known what it is. If we have been indulging in any sin, of course we could not find Him, then! If we have been cold-hearted, like the spouse who sought Him on her bed—like she, we have not found Him. We have had to rise, we have had to stir ourselves up to lay hold of Him, or else we have not found Him. You have known what it is to go to the public service of the sanctuary, where others have been fed, yet you have had to come away and say, "There has not been a morsel for me." Have you not ever turned to the Bible and to private prayer—and still you have had to say, "I sought Him, but I found Him not"? This is a very sad experience, but if it makes you sad, it will be good for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ would not have us think little of His company and, sometimes, it is only as we miss it that we begin to appreciate the sweetness of it! If we always had high days and holidays, we might not be so thankful when our gala days come round.

I have even known some of Christ's people get so pleased with the joy of His company that they have almost forgotten Him in the joy! If a husband gave his wife gold rings and ornaments and she was so gratified with the presents that she took but little note of him, but only prized the jewels that he gave her, I can well understand what would be the jealousy of his heart. It may be that this is why your Lord hides His face, for you never know His value so much as when the darkness deepens and the Star of Bethlehem shines not. When real soul-hunger comes on and the Bread of Heaven is not there. When you feel the pangs of the thirst of the spirit and you are like Hagar in the wilderness and cannot find the well of water, then will your Lord teach you His true value! And when you really know Him and know Him better than you formerly knew Him, then you shall no longer have to sigh, "I sought Him, but I found Him not," but you shall change your dolorous ditty for the cheerful language of the text, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves."

So I have brought you back to the text. These are the three steps by which we have ascended to the holy gate—first, "I love Him." Next, "I sought Him." And then, "I found Him not."

II. Secondly, inside the text there are THREE FURTHER STEPS—"I found Him," "I held Him," "I brought Him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me."

This is the first of the second series of steps, "*I found Him.*" I do not wish to stand here and speak for myself, alone, but I want, Beloved, that you should, each one of you, also say, "I love Him," "I sought Him" and now "I have found *Him.*" Notice what the spouse said, "I found Him." She was not satisfied with finding anything else—"I found Him." If she had found her nearest and dearest friend. If the mother of whom she speaks had met her, it would not have sufficed. She had said, "I love Him, I sought Him," and she must be able to add, "I found Him." Nothing but Christ *consciously enjoyed* can satisfy the craving of a loving heart which once sets out to seek the King in His beauty!

The city watchmen found the spouse and she spoke to them. She enquired of them, "Saw you Him whom my soul loves?" She did not sit down and say to any of them, "O watchman of the night, your company cheers me! The streets are lonely and dangerous, but if you are near, I feel perfectly safe and I will be content to stay a while with you." No, but she leaves the watchmen and goes along the streets until she finds *Him* whom her soul loves! I have known some who love the Lord to be very happy while the preacher is proclaiming the Truth of God to them, but they have stopped with the preacher and have gone no further. This will never do, dear Friends! Do not be content to abide with us who are only watchmen, but go beyond us and seek till you find our Master! I would groan in heart, indeed, if any of you believed simply because of my words, as if it were my words, alone, that led you to believe, or if you should look merely to me for *anything* you need for your soul. In myself I *am* nothing and I *have* nothing—I only watch that if I can, I may lead you to my Lord, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose.

O you who love Christ, go beyond the means of Grace! Go beyond ordinances, go beyond preachers, go beyond even the Bible, itself, into an actual possession of the living Christ! Labor after a conscious enjoyment of Jesus, Himself, till you can say with the spouse, "I found Him whom my soul loves." It is good to find sound doctrine, for it is very scarce, nowadays. It is good to learn the practical precepts of the Gospel. It is good to be in the society of the saints, but if you put any of *these* in the place of *communion with your* Lord, Himself, you do ill! Never be content till you can say, "I found *Him.*" Dear Souls, did you ever find Him? Have you yet found Him? If you have not, keep on seeking, keep on praying till at last you can say, "Eureka! I have found Him whom my soul loves. Jesus is, indeed, mine!"

What is meant by the words, "I found Him"? Well, I think a soul may say, "I found Him," in the sense employed in the text when, first of all, it has a clear view of His Person. My Beloved is Divine and Human, the Son of God and yet the Son of Man. My Beloved died, yet He is alive again. My Beloved was on earth, but He is now in Heaven and He will shortly come

again. I want thus to find Him, myself, and I want each one of you to do the same. Picture Him on Calvary, see Him risen from the dead. Try, if you can, not so much by *imagination* as by *faith*, to behold Him as He now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where harps unnumbered tune His praise! Yet, even there, He bears the wounds He received for us here below. How resplendent shine the nail-prints! The marks of His death on earth are the Glory of His Person above—

"This is the Man, the exalted Man,
Whom we unseen adore.
But when our eyes behold His face,
Our hearts shall love Him more!"

Let your soul picture Him so plainly that you can seem to see Him, for this will be a part of your finding Him.

But that will not be enough. You must then get to know that He is present with you. We cannot see Him, but yet He that walks amidst the golden candlesticks is, in spirit, in this House of Prayer at this moment. My Master, You are here. There is no empty seat at the table left to be filled by You, nor do we expect to see You walking among us in Your calm majesty, clothed with Your seamless garment down to Your feet. And we do not need to see You. Our faith realizes You quite as well as sight could do and we bless You that You hear us as we speak to You. You are invisible, yet assuredly present—You are looking into our faces, You are delighting in us as objects of Your redeeming love. You do especially remember that You died for us and, as a mother gazes upon the babe for whom she has endured so much, or as a shepherd looks upon the sheep that he has brought back from its long wanderings, so are You now looking upon each one of Your loved ones. If, dear Friends, you can get that thought fully into your minds—that Christ is really here in our midst—you can then, each one, begin to say, "I have found Him."

But you need more than that, namely, to feel that He *loves you*, loves you as if there were nobody else for Him to love! Loves you even as the Father loves Him. That is a daring thing to say and I would never have said it if He had not first uttered it. But He says, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." Can you comprehend how each one of the blessed Trinity loves each of the others and especially how the Father loves the Son? Even so does Jesus Christ love you, my believing Brother, my believing Sister! Note that He *loves* you—it is not only that He *did* love you and died for you, but He *still* loves you! He says to you, individually, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." Look at the nail-print—that is His memorial, His forget-me-not and, by it He says to you—

"Forget you I will not, I cannot, your name
Engraved on My heart does forever remain!
The palms of My hands while I look on I see
The wounds I received when suffering for thee."

Now, have you found Him? If you have pictured Him in your mind's eye. If you are certain of His Presence with you and then, above all, if you are fully assured of His love, you can say, "I have found Him."

If you can, in truth, say that, I hope there will come with it this one other thing, namely, an exceedingly great joy. I cannot speak to you as I

would wish—my words cannot express the joy of heart which I feel in knowing that I have found Him—that He is with me and that He has loved me with an everlasting love! I shall never understand, even in Heaven, why the Lord Jesus should ever have loved *me*. I can say to Jesus what David said in his lamentation over Jonathan, "Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." There is no love like it and why was it fixed upon *me*? Have you never felt that you could go in, like David, and sit before the Lord and say, "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me to this point?" Yet wonderful as it is, it is true—Jesus loves you, loves you, now, at this very moment! Do you not rejoice in it? I assure you that in the least drop of the love of Christ, when it is consciously realized, there is more sweetness than there would be in all Heaven without it! Talk of bursting barns, overflowing wine-vats and riches treasured up—these give but a poor solace to the heart! But the love of Jesus, this is another word for Heaven! And it is a marvel that even while we are here below we should be permitted to enjoy a bliss beyond what the angels know, for—

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming Grace and dying love,"

but that joy is ours if we can truly say, "I have found Him."

If you have come as far as that—and if you have not, may God help you to this point right speedily—come to the Table of your Lord! You are, indeed, His children, so you have a right to come. Hear the King's invitation, "Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved." These joys are not merely for some of the Lord's people but for all His saints! Then, stand not back, but come and feast on the rich provision of Divine Love!

Now we come to the second step. The spouse says, "*I held Him."* This is a deeper experience than the former one. "I held Him," means more than, "I found Him." Sometimes Jesus comes to His children and manifests Himself very sweetly to them, but they behave in an unseemly manner and soon He is gone. I have known Him reveal Himself to His people most delightfully, but they have grown cold, wayward, foolish—and He has been obliged to go away from them. When you get to the top of the mountain, it needs great Grace to stay there! I do not find it difficult to get into communion with Christ, but I confess that I do not find it so easy to maintain that communion. So that, if you have found Him, do as the spouse says that she did, "I held Him."

How are we to hold Christ? Well, first, let us hold Him by our heart's resolve. If now we have Him near us, let us lovingly look Him in the face and say, "My Lord, my sweet, blessed Lord, how can I let You go? My All in All, my heart's Lord and King, how can I let You go? Abide with me, go not from me." Hold Him by your love's resolve and it shall be as chains of gold to fasten Him to you! Say to Him, "My Lord, will You go away from me? See how happy You have made me. A glimpse of Your love has made me so blest that I do not envy the angels before Your Throne! Will You take that joy away from me by taking Yourself away? Why did You give me a taste of Your love if You do not mean to give me more? This little has but made me dislike all things else—You have spoiled me, now, for

all my former joy! O tarry with me, my Master, else am I unhappy, indeed!"

Further say to Him, "Lord, if You go, Your chosen one will be unsafe! There is a wolf prowling about—what will Your poor lamb do without You, O mighty Shepherd? There are cruel adversaries all around seeking my harm—how can I live without You? Will You deliver your turtledove over to the cruel fowler who seeks to slay her? Be that far from You, O Lord! Therefore, abide with me." Tell Him how you will sorrow if He goes away—

"'Tis paradise if You are here,
If you depart, 'tis Hell."

"Nothing can revive my spirit if You are gone from me. Oh, stay with me, stay with me, I beseech You, most blessed Lord!" As long as you can find arguments for His staying, Christ does not want to go from you. His delights are with the sons of men and He is happy in the society of those whom He has purchased with His precious blood! Keep on giving your reasons why He should remain with you and so hold Him. Be bold enough to even say to Him, "I will not let You go." Get Jacob's boldness when he said to the Angel of the Covenant, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." But go even beyond that—do not put in any, "unless," at all, but say, "I will not let You go, for I cannot be blest if You are gone from me."

Further, Brothers and Sisters, hold Him by making Him your All in All. He will never go away if you treat Him as He should be treated. Yield up everything to Him! Be obedient to Him. Be willing to suffer for Him. Grieve not His Holy Spirit. Crown Him, extol Him, magnify Him, keep on singing His praises for so will you hold Him! Renounce all else for Him, for He sees that you truly love Him when you count all things but dross for His dear sake. He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." Those were the days when some of you could accept a father's frown for the sake of Christ's love! When you could have given up your job and all your prospects in life to follow Jesus! It was then that He delighted in you and, in proportion as you break your idols, put away your sins and keep your heart chaste and pure for Him, alone, you shall abide in His love! Yes, and you shall get deeper and deeper into it till what was a stream up to your ankles shall soon be chest deep and, by-and-by, shall be waters to swim in!

Christ and you cannot fully agree unless you walk as He would have you walk, in careful holiness and earnest service for Him. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" And is there anything in this vile world that is fit to stand in rivalry with Him? Is there any gain, is there any joy, is there any beauty that can be compared with His gain, His joy, His beauty? Let each of us cry, "Christ for me! Go, harlot-world! Come not near even the outside of my door. Go, for my heart is with my Lord and He is my soul's chief treasure!" If you will talk like that, you will hold Him fast till you have your heart's desire and bring Him to your mother's house!

Hold Him, too, by a simple faith. That is a wonderful hold-fast. Say to Him, "My Lord, I have now found You and I rejoice in You, but still, if You hide Your face from me, I will still believe in You. If I never see a smile from You, again, till I see You on Your Throne, yet will I not doubt You, for my heart is fixed, not so much upon the realization of Your Presence, as upon Yourself and Your finished work. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You." Ah, then He will not go away from you—you can hold Him in that way! But if you begin to put your trust in enjoyments of His Presence instead of in Him, alone, it may be that He will take Himself away from you in order to bring you back to your old moorings, so that, as a sinner, you may trust the sinner's Savior and trust in Him, alone!

One word more before we leave this point. The only way to hold Christ is to hold Him by His own power. I smiled to myself as I read my text and tried to make it all my own—"I held Him and would not let Him go." I thought to myself, the spouse said of her Bridegroom that she would not let Him go—and shall I ever say to my Lord that I will not let Him go? He is the King of Kings, the Omnipotent Jehovah—can *I* hold *Him*? He is the mighty God and yet a poor puny worm like myself says, "I would not let Him go"? Can it be really so? Well, the Holy Spirit says that it is, for He guided the pen of the writer of this Song when he wrote, "I held Him and would not let Him go." Think of poor Jacob, who, when the Angel did but touch him, felt his sinews shrink, directly, yet he said, "I will not let You go." And I, a poor trembling creature, may hold the Omnipotent, Himself, and say to Him, "I will not let You go."

How is that wonder to be accomplished? I will tell you. If Omnipotence helps you to hold Omnipotence, why, then, the deed is done! If Christ and not you, alone, holds Christ, then Christ is held, indeed, for shall He vanquish His own self? No, Master, You could slay death and break the old serpent's head, but You cannot conquer Yourself! And if You are in me, I can hold You, for it is not I, but You in me, that holds Yourself and will not let You go! This is the power which enables us, with the Apostle, to 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."

The next step is described in the words, "*I brought Him.*" With this we finish. "I brought Him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me." And where, I pray you, Beloved, is our mother's house? I do not believe in any reverence for mere material *buildings*, but I have great reverence for the true Church of the Living God. The Church is the House of God and the mother of our souls. It was under the ministry of the Word that most of us were born to God. It was in the assembly of the saints that we heard the message which first of all quickened us into newness of life and we may well be content to call the Church of Christ our mother, since our elder Brother—you know His name—when one said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with You," pointing to His disciples, answered, "Behold, My mother, and My brethren. For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Surely, where Jesus chooses to call the assembly of the faithful by the sacred name of *mother*, we may rightly do the same!

And we love the Church, which is our mother. I do hope that all the members of this Church love the whole Church of God and also have a special affection for that particular part of it in which they were born for God. It would be unnatural—and Grace is never unnatural, though it is *supernatural*—it would be unnatural not to love the place where we were born into the heavenly family! I do not know and never shall know on earth the man who was the means of my conversion. I may know him when I get to Heaven, but if he is still living anywhere in this world, God bless him! And I know that many of you would say the same of the outward instrument which was used as the means of blessing to you—and you will say the same, will you not, of all the brotherhood of which some of us are but the spokesmen and representatives? We love the Church of God! Well, then, whenever we find our Beloved, we have to hold Him and not let Him go. And then to bring Him down to the house of our mother and to the chamber of her that conceived us.

How can you bring Christ to His Church? Partly, you can bring Him by your spirit. There is a wonderful power about a man's spirit, even though he does not speak a word. Silent worshippers can contribute very greatly to the communion of saints. I know some brethren—I will not say that any of them are now here—but I have known some brethren whose very faces dispirit and discourage one whose every movement seems to make one feel anything *but* spiritual. But I know others of whom I can truly say that it is always pleasant to me to shake their hands and to have a look from their eyes. I know that they have been with Jesus, for there is the very air of saintliness about them. I do not mean sanctimoniousness—that is a very different thing! In the old pictures, the painters used to put a halo round the head of a saint—a most absurd idea, but I believe that there is a *real* spiritual halo continually surrounding the man who walks with God.

If you, dear Friend, have really found Christ and bring Him with you into the assembly, you will not be the man who will criticize and find fault, and quarrel with your neighbor because he does not give you enough room in the pew. You will not be the person to pick holes in other people's coats, but you will be very considerate of others. As for yourself, anything will do for you, and anywhere will do for you, for you have seen the Beloved! You want other people to get as much good as they can. You are no longer selfish—how can you be, when you have found Him whom your soul loves? And now your poor Brother need not be very choice in the selection of his words—if he will only talk about Jesus, you will be quite satisfied! If his accents should be a little broken, you will not mind that. So long as you feel that he wishes to extol your Lord, that will be enough for you!

So, in this manner you will, in spirit, bring the Beloved to your mother's house, to the chamber of her that conceived you.

But, dear Friend, it will also be a happy thing if you are able to talk about your Lord, for then you can bring Him to the Church with your words. Those of us who are called to preach the Word have often to cry to

the Lord to help us to bring Christ into the assembly by our words—though, indeed, the words of any human language are but a poor conveyance for the Christ of God! Oh, let the King, my blessed Master, ride in the chariot of angelic song and not in the lumbering wagon of my poor sermons! I long to see Him flying on the wings of the wind and not in the car of my feeble language! Yet has He come to you many a time that way and you have been glad. Let Him come as He will, if He will but come, it is our delight to bring Him into our mother's house, into the chamber of her that conceived us!

Therefore, dear Friends, each one of you, in turn, as you are able, talk to your brother and to your sister and say, "I have found Him whom my soul loves." You know that when Samson killed the lion, he said nothing about it. It would have been a great feat for anyone else to boast of, but Samson could kill a lion any day, so he did not think much of doing that. But when he later found a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion, he took some of it and began to eat—and carried a portion of it to his father and mother. So, if ever you find sweetness and preciousness in Christ, the true Strong One, be sure that you carry a handful of the honey to your friends and give portions to those for whom otherwise nothing might be prepared!

Thus hold Christ fast and bring Him to your mother's house by your spirit and by your words.

But if, alas, you feel that you cannot speak for Christ, then, Beloved, bring Him by your prayers. Do pray, especially at these communion seasons, that the King, Himself, will come near and feast His saints. Ask Him not only to bless you, but to bless *all* His saints, for you are persuaded that they all love Him better than you do and that they all want Him as much as you do—and that they will all praise Him even more than you do if He will but come and manifest Himself to them! In this way, each one of you, as you come to the House of Prayer and to the place of fellowship, will be a real benefit to our spiritual force and we shall seem to get nearer and nearer to our Master as the house fills with loving worshippers who have found Him, and held Him, and brought Him here.

Now may we find all this to be especially true as we gather around the Table! The Lord be with you all, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
SOLOMON'S SONG 2; 3:1-5.

Here we have a dialogue of love between the Lord Jesus and His people.

Song of Solomon 2:1. *I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys.* Among all flowers, there is none that can be compared with Him—

"White is His soul, from blemish free,
Red with the blood He shed for me."

2. *As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.* The child of God cannot long be mistaken for a worldling. The lily rises up above its thorny companions, but everybody knows that it is not a thorn—and quickly do the eyes of the Lord Jesus discern His people

wherever they may be found. You, dear Friend, may, perhaps, come of a graceless family, or you may live in a house where God is all but unknown—yet Christ always knows His pure lilies, even if they grow among the cruel piercing thorns.

3. *As the apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.* You who love the Lord Jesus know what this verse means. He is a great variety of delights to you—food for your soul, a shadow for your head in the day of the sun's burning heat. When you are near Him, the sun does not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. There is no shadow like Christ's shadow, and no fruit like His fruit!

4. *He brought me to the banqueting house.* That, I trust, He will do again as He has often done before, both while we are hearing His Word and when we approach His Table—"He brought me to the banqueting house."—

4. *And His banner over me was love.* Not the fiery ensign of war, but the peaceful banner of love! You have had enough of the world, Beloved, during the past six days—you will again have enough of it in the six days yet to come—but just now let Love's royal banner wave over you and give your thoughts entirely to Him who has loved you with an everlasting love, and sealed His love to you by the blood that streamed from His pierced heart.

5. *Sustain me with cakes of raisins, comfort me with apples: for I am lovesick.* The love of Christ shed abroad in our heart sometimes quite overpowers it. It is very possible to be so delighted, so full of joy with a sense of the love of Jesus, that one feels unable to bear any more of it! Oh, for more of this blessed sickness! "It is a strange thing," says one, "this love of Christ"—

"For, oh, when whole, it makes me sick,
When sick, it makes me whole!"

6, 7. *His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field.* Those lovely, but timid creatures that are so easily scared away—

7. *That you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please.* O you carking cares, keep away from us! You distractions that are so apt to arise in our crowded assembly, you aches and pains that come in and make the body drag down the spirit, keep away from us for a while!

8. *The voice of my Beloved!* The spouse knows it at once! Her ears are so trained that she recognizes it as soon as she hears it. Jesus said that His sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. And He added, "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

8. *Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.* "I thought my sins would keep Him back, for they seemed like great mountains—how could He come to me? But, 'behold,' He makes nothing of those barriers! 'He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.'"

9. *My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, He stands behind our wall, He looks forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice.* When we observe the ordinances, aright, they are like latticed windows—we cannot see our Lord through them as clearly as we would like, but still, we do see Him and we are thankful for these windows until we get up yonder, where we shall see Him face to face!

10-13. *My Beloved spoke and said to me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away.* No matter what the weather is outside, it may be spring within. If your hearts have been frost-bound and barren, may they now begin to thaw at the approach of Jesus! Many of us have asked for His company and believe that He will be here—and when He comes, He will make our souls rejoice! They shall be as watered gardens when the spring returns.

14. *O My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely.* Christ calls *you* out, you hidden ones! You who are half ashamed to be seen, He bids you come to Him! Come away from your doubts and your fears, your halting and your hesitating—it is Jesus who calls you—therefore come to Him at once!

15. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.* Drive away every sin that would keep Christ away. Ask for His Grace to subdue every wandering thought that He may be with you in undisturbed communion.

16, 17. *My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.*

Song of Solomon 3:1-5. *By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise, now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broadways I will seek Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you Him whom my soul loves? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please.*

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

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

OVERCOMING CHRIST
NO. 2486

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 11, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1876.

"Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me."
Song of Solomon 6:5.

THIS is the language of the Heavenly Bridegroom to His spouse. In great condescension, He speaks to her and bids her take note that her eyes have overcome Him. This morning, [Sermon #1317, Volume 22—*Overcome Evil with Good—read/download at http://www.spurgeongems.org*] our subject was overcoming evil with good. We have a very different subject this evening, for we are to talk about overcoming Him who is *Goodness* itself, the perfection of everything that is excellent! Saints first learn the art of overcoming evil and then they learn the way to overcome goodness, too. But how different, dear Friends, are the weapons employed in these two battles, for while, this morning, as we spoke of overcoming evil, we saw that there was much for us to do—and I think that we all felt it was more than we could do apart from Divine Grace—yet here there is nothing to be done but just to give a look! The Heavenly Bridegroom confesses Himself to be overcome by the very *look* of the eyes of His spouse. She has but to gaze steadily upon Him and His heart is vanquished by the glances of her eyes!

Now, it must not be supposed because of the language of the text that there is any opposition between Christ and His people which has to be overcome. He loves His bride far too well to allow any division of feeling to separate them in heart from one another. Nor is it to be imagined that the spouse had to gain some blessing from an unwilling hand and, therefore, pleaded with her eyes as well as with her lips. Oh, no! There is a holy discipline in Christ's house that sometimes withholds the coveted blessing till we have learned to pray in downright earnest, but the power that wins the victory in prayer has its real basis in the love of Christ, Himself! It is because He loves us so much that He permits our prayers to conquer Him—it is not so much because we love Him as because He loves us that He permits the look of our eyes to overcome His heart. This, then, is the subject for our meditation—the way in which God's people overcome the heart of Jesus Christ and make Him say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me."

I. First, dear Friends, let us notice that LOOKING ON HIS CHURCH HAS ALREADY OVERCOME THE HEART OF OUR HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM.

It was so *in the far-distant past*, not when she looked at Him, but when He looked at her, that she overcame Him. Ages upon ages ago, before the earth was, Christ had conceived in His heart the purpose to redeem from among men a people that should be precious in His sight forever and ever. Through the glass of Divine foreknowledge, He looked at His people, He recognized every single one of them, He saw them all ruined in the Fall, all stained with sin, all contaminated in nature by our first parents' disobedience and rebellion. As He looked at them with a steady resolve that He would rescue them, perfect them, lift them up to a level with Himself and make them into a race that would praise God forever in Heaven with hallelujahs and hosannas beyond all the harmonies of angels, His heart so moved towards them that He longed for the time when He would enter upon the great work of their redemption. Long ago, He said, "My delights were with the sons of men." His heart was always projecting itself forward in anticipation of that happy, yet dreadful day, when He would be called upon to redeem His people.

Every time He thought of them, He was overcome with the very recollection of His great love towards them. And when the long-expected day did, at last, come—

"Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste He fled,"

and was found as a Babe in Bethlehem's manger, lying among the oxen feeding in the stable of the village inn. Oh, marvelous mystery! that He, whom the Heaven of heavens could not contain, was not satisfied to be God Over All, blessed forever, but for our sakes He must also become Man! He was so overcome by the love He had for His chosen that He left His Father's Throne of Light to become one flesh with His people and to be made a Man, like ourselves, so that He might be next of kin to us. Ah, gracious Savior, Your Church's eyes did, indeed, overcome You when they brought You from amidst the royalties of Heaven down to the sins and sorrows of earth!

You know, too, *when He lived down here among men*, how often His inmost heart was stirred as He looked upon the people whom He loved. And especially do you remember the scene on that last night when their redemption price was about to be paid. He took the cup that He was to drink and sipped at it, but His holy soul revolted from it—and with the bloody sweat upon His face He cried, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Then He went back and looked upon His people. Truly, there was not much to see in them—He had taken three specially privileged Apostles to be the representatives of all His chosen—and those three were asleep when He was in His terrible agony! Yet, somehow, the sight of them seemed to strengthen Him for the awful ordeal that He was enduring. Back and forth, three times, He ran to gaze upon them and they so overcame Him that He turned back and said to His Father, "Nev-

ertheless not as I will, but as You will." And He went through with that tremendous work of laying down His life for His people—and drinking the cup of wrath that was their due. They had overcome Him as *He* had looked at *them!*

And, Beloved, now that *our Lord is risen from the dead*, He still feels the power of the sight of His redeemed. The great joy of Christ at this moment is found in gazing at His redeemed ones. Look at Him as Man, if you will, and what a wondrous Man He is! But remember, also, that God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name! And what does the glorified and exalted Christ think as He looks on the myriads in Heaven, all of whom would have been in Hell but for Him? Then He looks down to the saints on earth and sees the myriads who are all trusting in Him, all conquering sin by His might and all spared from going down to the Pit by the merit of His precious blood—and He seems, again, to say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me," as if Christ felt that a glance at His people brought almost too much joy to Him! What a day that will be when He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God— when all His people, raised from the dead, or changed in the twinkling of an eye, shall admire Him—and He shall be admired in them!

And what will be the joy of His heart when the "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues"—all redeemed by His blood—shall be gathered to Christ, to be the delight of His heart forever and ever! That will be a joy sufficient, even, for the immensity of His infinite heart as He sees in them the reward of His awful agonies, the rich return for the shedding of His precious blood! His benevolence—that great mainspring of all that He has done—will be gratified and satisfied as He looks on each one of His redeemed and sees the fruit of His travail in every individual child of His Grace, in each sinner reclaimed, in each saint preserved and perfected! I can well conceive of Him saying in that day, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." The joy that Christ will feel in His own sight of His people and in the glances of the multitudes that He has saved, must be a delight beyond anything we can even imagine!

II. Now I must pass to a second point, which is this, that THE EYES OF CHRIST'S CHOSEN ONES STILL OVERCOME HIM. This is a practical point upon which we may profitably spend some little time—the eyes of Christ's chosen ones still overcome Him.

And, first, the eyes of His chosen overcome Him when they look up in deep repentance, glancing at Him hopefully through their tears. Let me try to give you a picture of such a case. Here is a poor soul, conscious of having sinned, and sinned deeply. Once sin was thought to be only a trifle. Now it is seen to be a horrible evil, to be trembled at and hated. Once God was judged to be too severe in sending men to Hell, but now the convicted one has nothing to say against God's Justice, for he is all taken up with speaking against himself and his sin. There stands this poor

soul with red and weeping eyes, saying, "O God, I have sinned, and I am still sinning. And if You cast me into the abyss I dare not challenge Your Justice, yet have pity upon me, O Lord! God, be merciful to me a sinner!" When those tear-filled eyes are turned to the Lord Jesus and sin is confessed again and again with deep contrition and childlike repentance, it is not *possible* that He should long refuse to grant the pardon which we seek! He seems to say to the poor penitent, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. I cannot bear to see you weeping and sorrowing so. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you, for I have loved you with an everlasting love. Go, and sin no more." There is a wondrous power in the penitent eye, in the full confession that makes a clean breast of every sin before the face of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that when we have once repented, we do not leave off repenting, for penitence is a Grace that is as long-lived as faith! And as long as we are capable of believing, we shall also necessarily need to repent, for we shall always be sinning. So, *whenever the child of God feels that he has gone astray in any way,* that, though he did live near to God, he has gone back and grown cold in heart, he has only to come to Christ, again, and cry after Him—and confess his folly in having left Him and his ingratitude in having been so indifferent to Him—and Christ will receive him back again! You cannot long mourn His absence and seek to return to Him, and feel that you will die if you do not get back the realization of His sweet love again—you cannot be long in that state before He will be vanquished by your weeping eyes and He will say to you, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." And if a child of God who has not lost fellowship with his Lord, is, nevertheless, anxious lest he should do so—if his morning prayer is, "O my Lord, keep me from everything that would take me away from Your love." And if at night He looks back over His conduct during the day and says, "Cleanse me from every secret fault, for—

"'I am anxious of my heart,
Lest it should once from You depart"—

if there is kept up this delightful tenderness of conscience towards Christ, so that our eyes, with weeping for very fear of sin, still look after Him, then shall we hold Him spellbound and the deep sorrow of our loving hearts shall vanquish Him! And He will bestow the blessing which our soul is seeking.

Another kind of glance that has great power with the Lord Jesus is *when the soul looks to Christ for salvation.* Then it is that the eyes vanquish the Savior. It is hard, at first, to look to Christ and believe that He can save you. I suppose some of you, dear Friends, have a distinct recollection of the first faith-glance you ever took at Christ. I well remember mine—it seemed so strangely simple and yet so sublime and wonderful, that I could scarcely think it true that there was life in a look at Him! I did but glance half furtively at first, as if I thought it could not mean that such a sinner as I was could receive mercy from Christ simply by looking at Him. Did He really mean *me* when He said, "Look to me, and be you

saved, all the ends of the earth"? I had long sought Him and I had prayed to Him—but I could not conquer Him, nor win mercy from Him by my seeking and my praying. But oh, when my eyes, already red with weeping, looked at Him with a steady glance which seemed to say—

"I do believe, I will believe,
That you did die for me,"

then did He cry, "'Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.' 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.'"

Many times since then, you and I have looked to Jesus Christ *when a sense of sin has been very heavy upon us*. I suppose all of you who are really children of God sometimes get into that state in which you begin to ask, "Was I ever truly converted? Did my sins ever roll from my shoulders and disappear in the tomb of Christ?" When these questions arise within your heart, go and stand, once more, at the foot of the Cross, and look at your suffering Lord. I have looked, and looked, and looked again, until I have seemed to look Him all over, and at last I have begun to sing—

"Oh, 'tis sweet to view the flowing
Of my Savior's precious blood,
With Divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God."

While the eyes of faith are thus resting upon Jesus, He is overcome by them and He darts inexpressible joy into our hearts as He says to us, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." His heart is carried by storm by the faith-looks of His children!

We also give another overcoming glance *when we look to the Lord Jesus Christ for all things*. Worldlings do not understand the terms on which we are linked with Christ. To them Christ is a somebody who lived 1800 years ago and then died. But to us He is alive! He is our familiar Friend! We are intimately acquainted with Him. We are in the habit of taking all our troubles to Him and asking Him for all that we need—and He removes our sorrows and grants us the desires of our hearts. There are times with all of us when we get into trouble of one sort or another and, blessed be His name, He has taught us, when we are in trouble, to lift up our eyes to the hills from where comes our help. Now, perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have, for a while, been looking to Christ and saying, "Lord, I believe You will help me. Did You die to save me from Hell and will You not supply me with bread and water while I am in the wilderness? Have you covered me with the robe of your perfect righteousness and will you not find me clothes to cover my nakedness and shield me from the weather? Have you done the greater, and will you not do the lesser?"

When another trouble comes, you keep on looking to Him! You will not believe that He can be unkind—you give Him credit for loving you, and caring for you, so look to Him—and as you look, submit to His will and say, "I will never distrust You, my Lord." If He sends yet another rough Providence, you continue looking to Him and only say, "Show me why You contend with me. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You. I have

known You too long to doubt You now, my blessed Lord. You have done too much for me in the past for me to turn away and say, "I will not trust You." My Lord and Master, You cannot make me believe that You do not love me, for I know You better. My inmost soul is assured that You do love me, so I look to You, still, and watch the movement of Your Countenance. And as I look, my heart says, "My Lord, I cannot tell why You strike Your servant again and again, yet, if it is Your love that makes You strike, strike on. Whatever is most for Your Glory, do with me as You will." When your eyes are like that, full of submission, full of hope, full of trust—it cannot be long before the Lord will, somehow or other, deliver you, for He will say, "I cannot hold out against you any longer. 'Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.' I will bring you out of the furnace, for I only sit there as Refiner till I see My own image in you. And when I see My eyes in your eyes, and My heart in your heart, and My Character in your character, then will I bring you out of the furnace as gold seven times purified." Blessed Spirit, give us such eyes as these, which shall overcome even the heart of Christ!

Again, there are the eyes of prayer which often overcome the Lord Jesus Christ, and this victory comes, sometimes, *when we are praying for ourselves*. You know what it is in prayer, to come to Him and say, "Lord, I am in great straits, and You have, Yourself, brought me there. It has not been through my folly, but it is by Your own act and deed that I am where I am. Now, Lord, You have promised that in six troubles You will deliver us, and in seven there shall no evil touch us. You have said, 'Your shoes shall be iron and brass and, as your days, so shall your strength be.' Now, Lord, You are God and You cannot lie, therefore will You not keep Your promise? Here, Lord, You see my difficulty and my trial, and Your inspired Apostle has said that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Your servant David declared that 'many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.' Now, Lord, I look to You to do this for me."

It is one of the grandest things in all the world when a godly man, with the simplicity of a child, believes God and fully trusts Him for everything! It has come to be a matter of marvel, in this evil age, that a man can say that God grants him many mercies in answer to prayer. People hold up their hands and say, "Dear, dear, what a wonder!" A wonder that God hears prayer?! It would be a *greater* wonder if He did *not* hear it! Beloved, to me prayer is a matter of fact. For me to go and take a promise to God and ask Him to fulfill it, and to get it fulfilled, is as common and as usual and as much a matter of fact as it is for you who are in business to take checks and pass them across the counter at the bank and receive the cash for them. Do you think that God is a fiction? If He is, then all our religion is a farce! But if God is real, then prayer is real, too. Many of us know that it is real, for we have tried it and still try it every day we live! In every time of trouble, we bring the trouble to God's feet and say, "Dear

Lord, as You are true and faithful, You will help us through it." And we find that He *does* help us through it! We speak what we know and testify what we have seen many a time. When a child of God, in deep distress, believes in his Father, and steadily looks to Him for deliverance, those eyes of his have mighty power and God seems to say to him, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." You cannot look steadily to God and say, "Lord, I am sure about Your faithfulness, I am sure about Your promise and I cannot and will not doubt it," but before long you shall see the hand of the Lord made bare for your deliverance—and you, also, shall be among the happy number who have to bear witness that, verily, there is a God in Israel! Thus does prayer prevail with God when we present it for ourselves.

So does it also overcome Him *when we pray on behalf of others*. Moses, you know, prayed for others and prevailed. Do you, dear children of God, know what it is to wrestle with the Lord for the souls of others? I am sure that many of you do. There are your dear children, kinsfolk, friends and neighbors whom you bring before the Lord. I will tell you when you will win the day, mother, when, with tears you say, "O God, You have given me these children; now give them to me according to the spirit as well as according to the flesh." You will overcome the Lord, dear Father, when you spread your suit before Him and say, "Deny my children what You will, but save them—let them all be Yours in the day when You make up Your jewels." You will succeed when, rising from your knees, you set those children a Christian example and, having pleaded with God for them, you go and plead with them for God—and feel as if your heart would break if you did not see your boys and girls converted! When, like Hannah, you even come to be a woman of a sorrowful spirit because you feel that you must have your children brought to God, then the Lord Jesus will look at you till He will say to Himself, "I cannot let that poor soul cry and sigh in vain. It is not in My heart—the heart of One who was born of a woman—to let that pleading woman's prayer go without an answer." And to you He will say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. Be it to you even as you will."

And you, dear child of God, who are teaching in the Sunday school class, or you who are preaching in some small village station—when you get to feel inward grief of heart over those with whom you have to deal—when that grief increases till it comes to be a perfect agony and you cannot help crying out for anguish of soul. When you feel as if you must have them saved. When you feel as if you would give everything you had if they might but be brought to Christ. When you even wake at night to pray for them and, in the midst of your business cares you get distracted with the thought that some whom you love are perishing—at such times as that, your powerful eyes in prayer shall move the heart of Christ and overcome Him—and He shall give you those souls for your hire!

Brothers and Sisters, if we do not pray for sinners, for whom shall we pray? If we do not plead for the abandoned, if we do not offer supplications for those who are perverse in heart, we have omitted to pray for the

very persons who most need our intercession! Let us bring these hard hearts beneath the almighty hammer! Let us, by prayer, bring these lepers beneath the healing touch of Him who, despite their loathsomeness, can say to them, "Be you clean!" Let no degree of natural or inherited depravity, or of depravity that has come from long continuance in sin, hinder us from praying for all the unsaved whom we know! "O God, have mercy upon these guilty ones!"

I will not further enlarge upon this point, for it is settled beyond all question that those who love the souls of men will not be hindered from prayer for them on any account whatever. I entreat you, who have prayed for husbands or children, or friends, do not leave off pleading for them! If you have prayed for twenty years, and they are not converted, pray twenty years more! And if they have grown more wicked while you have pleaded, still pray on! And if Heaven and earth and Hell seem to combine together to bid you cease your supplications, still pray on. As long as you live, make intercession for transgressors—and as long as they live, let your cries go up to God on their behalf. So shall you "overcome Heaven by prayer" as you plead for the ungodly.

Once again, there is another time when the eyes of the Believer seem to overcome the heart of Christ, and that is *when we have turned right away from the world and looked to Him alone.* I have known it so, again and again. Have you not, too, Beloved? In this world, at present, our Lord is somewhat concealed. He does not fully reveal Himself to His people. Here He says to us as He said to Mary, "Touch Me not." He lets us wait till the veil shall be drawn up and then we shall see Him face to face, and shall be like He is. Here we have to live by *faith* rather than by sight, and it is *expectation* rather than enjoyment that makes up much of our present bliss. Yet, at times I have known my Lord come wonderfully near to His servants and lay bare His inmost heart to them. It seemed as if He could not help it—it has been at some such gathering as this, when we have gone right away from the world and have forgotten its cares and pleasures for a while—and we have sat down to think only of Him. Our soul has surveyed Him in His Godhead and His Manhood, as our Prophet, Priest, King and near Kinsman—living, dying, risen, ascended, soon to come—we have looked Him over and there has not been any part of His Character which we have not admired, nor one office in which we have not trusted Him, nor one deed for which we have not blessed Him! We have come to think, "He is altogether lovely," and while we have been admiring Him in a perfect rapture, there has been added to it this sweet thought—He is all goodness, and He is all *mine*—from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet. "My Beloved is mine and I am His."

We have not said much and we could not have said much just then. We have been quite quiet and alone with our Lord—and we have felt that silence was the only eloquence we could use as we looked at Him again, and again, and again. At such seasons, my soul has felt ready to swoon away in His Presence. You remember how John, in Patmos, when Jesus appeared to him, said, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead"? And

well He might, for He had a brighter vision of His Lord than you and I can have at present. But even faith's view of Him is enough to transport us straight away into Heaven, itself! Well, Brothers and Sisters, whenever we are thus happily engaged in contemplation of our Lord, not only is He very near us, but He is greatly moved by our love and He says to us, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." And, meanwhile, to prove how overcome He is, He begins to reveal Himself more fully to us!

You may, perhaps, have read in the life of holy Mr. Flavell the extraordinary instance he records of the love of Christ being poured into his soul. He says that he was riding a horse, going to some engagement, and he had such a sense of the love of Christ that he completely lost himself for several hours. And when he came to himself, again, he found his horse standing quite still and discovered that he had been sitting on horseback all those hours, utterly lost to everything but a special revelation of the wonderful love of Jesus! You may also have heard of Mr. Tennant, the mighty American preacher and friend of George Whitefield, who was found, lost and absorbed, in a forest to which he had retired. His friends had to call him back, as it were, from the sweet fellowship he had been enjoying with Christ. You may remember, too, John Welsh, the famous Scotch preacher who had to cry out, "Hold, Lord, hold! I am but an earthen vessel, and if I feel more of Your glorious love, I must even die! So stay Your hand a while."

There *are* such experiences as these. I will not enquire whether you have ever known them, but if you have, I will tell you one thing—all the infidels in the world and all the devils in Hell will never make you doubt the truth of the Scriptures if you have once been face to face with Christ and have spoken with your Master as a man speaks with His friend! Such things have happened to those whose cloud-piercing eyes have been so fixed upon Christ that He, at last, has felt the mighty fascination of their loving and believing glances and has revealed Himself in still greater measure to them and made them even more blest than they were before!

Last of all, sometimes the eyes of Christians have great power in overcoming Christ *when they long for His appearing*. Have you ever seen the saints lie dying with such language as this on their lips, "Why are His chariots so long in coming? Why does He tarry?—

"'Hurry, my Beloved, fetch my soul
Up to Your blessed abode!
Fly, for my spirit longs to see
My Savior and my God.'"

I have heard them say, with evident regret, "I thought to have been in Heaven long before now." I have seen them almost grieve when the doctor has said that they were better and that there was hope that they might last another month or two! They seemed to say, "Why should my banishment continue? Why should my release be postponed? These chains of clay which seem so hard to shake off, these fetters of brass—will they

never drop from me? Must I still linger in this world of pain and sorrow, and sin and suffering? Why not let me go?" And they have been like a poor thrush which I have sometimes seen a boy try to keep upon a little bit of turf—it longed for the broad fields—and beat itself against the wires of its cage. So is it with our dear suffering friends, at times—yet they have learned patiently to wait till their change came. But often their eyes have been so fixed upon their Lord that they have said to Him, "Will You never come?" And, at last, Christ has looked out of Heaven so sweetly on those sick ones and He has said, "Your eyes have overcome Me. Come up higher." And they have leaped out of their body into His bosom and the pierced hands have received their blood-washed spirits—and they have been "forever with the Lord!"

I am looking forward, and I trust we who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are all looking forward to that day when God will let us languish into life! When we shall see the bars of the prison opened once and for all and we shall pass through them, and leave this dying world behind to go to the land of the living, the land of the hereafter, where we, too, shall be "forever with the Lord!" Keep your hearts always longing for that blessed hour! Keep your eyes always looking upward, Beloved. Set small store on anything here—and be always ready to depart and so, full often, shall Jesus say to you, as though He could no longer bear that you should gaze upon Him though, indeed, He loves it all the while, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." God bless you all, Beloved, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 32:22-30; EXODUS 32:7-14; MARK 7:24-30.

We shall read three short portions of Scripture, all illustrative of the great Truth that God has sometimes given Grace to His people to overcome Himself—the Almighty has condescended to be vanquished by man! First, let us read the story of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, the 32nd Chapter, at the 22nd verse—

Genesis 32:22-24. *And he rose up that night and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his 11 sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over all that he had. And Jacob was left alone.* He had made a quiet oratory for himself by sending everyone else of the company over to the other side of the brook—his own resolve being—

"With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day."

24, 25. *And there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw*—When the wrestling Man, the Angel of the Covenant, saw—

25, 26. *That He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.* When we come nearest to God, we must

have a deep sense of our own personal weakness. It must never be supposed, if our suit prevails with Heaven, that there is *anything* in us, or anything in our *prayers* to account for our prevalence. Whatever power we have, must come from God's Grace, alone, and, therefore, usually when we pray so as to prevail with the Lord there is at the same time a shrinking of the sinew, a consciousness of weakness, a sense of pain—yet it is just then that we are prevailing and, therefore, we may rest assured that our prayer will be answered. The Angel said, "Let Me go," at the very time when Jacob felt the shrinking of the sinew—"He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he (Jacob) said, I will not let You go, except You bless me."

27-29. *And He said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, Your name. And he said, Why is it that you ask about My name?* Holy desires will be realized and believing prayers will be answered, but mere *curiosity* will not be gratified! Those who read the Scriptures with a view simply to find out novelties that may tickle their fancy, read in vain. The Covenant Angel will give you what you will if it is necessary for you, but He will not answer your idle questions. He said to Jacob, "Why is it that you ask about My name?"

29, 30. *And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."* Thus did Jacob the wrestler overcome his God! Now turn to the 32nd Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we find a description of the sin of idolatry into which the Israelites fell while Moses was absent in communion with God upon the mountain. The people brought their golden earrings to Aaron and he made a calf, and they bowed before it, saying, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." While this wickedness was going on, Moses was on the mountaintop with God.

Exodus 32:7. *And the LORD said to Moses, Go, get you down; for your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves!* See how Jehovah will not acknowledge these idolaters as *His* people? He says to Moses, "*Your* people which *you* brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."

8-10. *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 to Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: 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.* What a great future was thus opened up before Moses! He might become another Abraham and in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed! But Moses loves the people, even the people who have vexed and provoked

him so many years. He still loves them so much that, even before he begins to pray for them, God says, "Let Me alone," as if He felt the force of Moses' *coming prayer* and would not have him offer it! O wondrous power of intercession, that by it even God's right hand is held back when it is lifted up to strike!

11. *And Moses urged 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?* Moses will not have it that they are *his* people, nor that *he* brought them out of the land of Egypt. But he declares that they are *God's* people, and that *He* brought them forth "with great power, and with a mighty hand."

12-14. *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 to them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever. And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do to His people.* So a second time the mighty power of prayer was proven and the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man! In the seventh Chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, beginning at the 24th verse, is another story which you know well, which tells how the Lord Jesus was overcome by a woman's mighty faith.

Mark 7:24-29. *And from there He arose, and went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she urged Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she answered and said to Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said to her, For this saying go your way; the devil is gone out of your daughter.* Christ capitulated at once! He yielded to the strong arms of conquering prayer and faith—and so the pleading woman had her will!

30. *And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.*

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

ORDERED STEPS
NO. 2487

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 18, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 29, 1886.

"Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."
Psalm 119:133.

NOTICE, in the previous verse, how the Psalmist expresses his longing desire to be treated as one of the Lord's family—"Look upon me, and be merciful to me, as You used to do to those that love Your name." We, also, dear Friends, wish to be treated as God treats all the rest of His children. I am sure that every humble Believer will be quite content with that arrangement. There was a time when you would have been willing that He should make you one of His hired servants, but you have seen the mistake of such a desire as that and now your prayer is, "Deal with me, O Lord, as one of Your children; treat me according to Your custom with Your redeemed! I do not ask anything different from the lot of the rest of the heirs of Heaven. If they are poor, I would be poor with them. If they suffer reproach, I would be reproached with them. If they carry a cross, I would carry a cross, too. Whatever is the appointed portion of the Lord's children, I am prepared to share and share alike with them. If You chasten them, I hope to have Your chastening. If You smile upon them, I shall delight to be smiled upon as You are known to smile on them." Brothers and Sisters, we feel a sweet kind of communism in the Church of God—we, none of us, desire to have anything more than this common lot of the redeemed family.

At the same time, each Believer must have and will have his own apprehension of his personal needs and he will, therefore, present to the Lord his own special prayer. I hoped, just now, when we were praying, that my words might suit the cases of many of you, but I felt more concerned that each one should be offering petitions and the thanksgivings for himself. Oh, what power there often is in those personal prayers where there is no audible voice, but only the lips move, as did Hannah's! At such times the woman of a sorrowful spirit goes her way comforted because of her secret fellowship with God. Do not imagine that *any* form of prayer—liturgical or extempore—can meet the needs of your case at all times. No, you must present your own *personal* supplication, and the Lord seems to say to you, as Ahasuerus said to Esther, "What is your petition, and it shall be granted you. And what is your request…it shall be performed."

It seems to me that my text may suit all of us who are in this assembly. I am sure that it suits me. I have prayed it before I have preached from it and I desire to be praying it while I am preaching concerning it. I commend it to those who are just beginning the Divine Life and I suggest it as equally appropriate to those who may have wandered somewhat out of the way of holiness. Yes, and I suggest it to those who are venerable and full of wisdom. I suggest it even to my elders, to the beloved fathers in our Israel, that this is a prayer which may last all of us right up to the gates of Heaven! "Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." You, too, who are just beginning to seek the Savior, should be told that this is the kind of spirit to which you will have to come—and if the Lord brings you to be His own, this is the kind of prayer that you will pray. And if you cannot pray it and *will* not pray it, you will bear witness against yourselves that you are *not* the children of God. I am sure that I am not too severe when I say that.

I. As the Holy Spirit shall enable me, I want to bring out four things in this text which are well worthy of your earnest consideration. The first is the COMPLETE SUBSERVIENCE to the will of God of the man who thus prayed, "Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

You see, he begins his prayer with the word, "*order*." He is a man who wishes to be under orders. He is willing to obey the Lord's commands and he is anxious to receive them and to be made to carry them out. Now this is *not* the way of the world—worldlings say, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice? We are our own masters! Who is Lord over us?" Free thinking and free living—these are the desires of ungodly men. But when the Grace of God has renewed the heart, the soul finds its true freedom in *obedience* to Christ's commands, and its best thinking while sitting at the feet of Jesus to observe His gracious Words.

"Order my steps in Your Word." Beloved, once we lived without any order or plan, or method, but the Grace of God makes us method-ists in the highest possible sense. It makes us live according to God's method—and our prayer is that we may never be disorderly, but that in all things, just as the universe is arranged by God, and all the stars keep their appointed courses, so we may be made to take our proper places, and may be kept in them—joyfully obedient to the will of the Most High! It is one of the marks of the Grace of God when we ask God to order us and willingly put ourselves under His command.

Moreover, the Psalmist prayed, "Order my steps in Your Word." He was perfectly satisfied with God's Revelation. He had not so much of it as we have but there was room enough in it for all his steps. "Order *my steps in Your Word*." He needed no greater liberty than the Bible gave him, no wider range than he found in the commands of the Most High. His prayer was like that verse we sang just now—

"Make me to walk in Your commands,
'Tis a delightful road.
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,
Offend against my God."

Are you satisfied, dear Hearer, to keep within the compass of the Divine command? If so, take it as an evidence that God has changed your heart!

But oh, my dear Hearer, if you live outside of that Book. If you never get inside it at all. If you never care what it says, what it promises, what it commands—then take it as certain that you do *not* know the Lord! Let us, each one, at this moment breathe this prayer to God, "Order my steps in Your Word. Make me to live as a man who is under authority—one who finds directions for his living in the Law of his God, and who makes it his desire and his delight to be conformed thereto."

So you see the complete subservience of the man of God—his earnest desire that he might be cleared from every kind of iniquity. I may mention that in the Hebrew, the prayer, "Order my steps in Your Word," may mean, "*Make my steps firm in Your Word.*" The Psalmist would be kept from all vacillation, hesitation, or wandering, but he wants, when he is right, to be firmly right, to be distinctly, decidedly right, so he pleads, "Make my steps firm." Oh, how we often stagger along! We do what is right, but we quiver and shake while we are doing it! Have you not known, dear Friends, what it was to seem to be wavering? Your feet had almost gone, your steps had well-near slipped. But the Psalmist's prayer is that his obedience may be firm, decided, steady obedience. You young beginners will do well to pray that this experience may be yours. It is often given to God's saints, when they have been long in His ways, to get confirmed in habit of righteousness so that they are not carried about by every wind of temptation. And it should be the prayer of all God's servants that they may be so established in righteousness that they can say with the Apostle Paul, "From henceforth let no man trouble me." It is no use for them to try it, for they cannot entice me away from my dear Master's service. "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." I bared my back to be branded as Christ's slave so that the mark shall never be removed as long as I live! I have given my arm to be tattooed with the Cross, so that never, while I have an arm to move, should it belong to anybody but to Christ Himself!

It is a blessed thing when you reach this point and say, "I cannot and I will not listen to your temptations, O sinful world! You may call, but I will not answer. You may invite, but I will not listen. The time of parleying is past, the hour for making my choice is over. I belong to God and my prayer is that my footsteps may always be confirmed in obedience to His mind and will."

I leave this prayer with you as to its complete subservience. Do you kick against it? Do you want to be something other than God would have you to be? My dear Hearer, I am sorry for you! But if, on the other hand, you yield to Him and desire to be like wax under the seal, that God may stamp upon you His own Image—and no other then the Lord is dealing with you in a way of Grace—then you may confidently hope that you belong to Him.

II. Now, secondly, I call your attention to the CAREFUL WATCHFULNESS of this prayer, the detailed watchfulness of it—"Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

You see that the Psalmist enters into detail when he presents this petition. He does not say merely, "Order my life," but, "Order my *steps*." Godly men desire to be kept right by God even in the little things of life. It is

often in little things, such as steps, rather than in long periods of running, that the good or the evil may be most plainly seen. Blessed is that man to whom there exists no such thing as a trifle, who desires to serve God even in the jots and tittles, for he shall not fall by little and little, as so many have done. He shall not have gray hairs upon him here and there, and yet not know it, for his careful watchfulness shall enable him to detect the slightest defection from the right way and so shall he be able to hold to the straight path of integrity. Brothers and Sisters, the old proverb is, "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves," which I will translate into the language of our text, "Take care of the steps, and the day's walking, as a whole, will take care of itself." True Christians want the Lord to bless them in *everything*, yes, even in those plain and simple words which drop from their lips almost without a thought. We do more wrong, perhaps, by lack of *thought* than by any will to do evil and, therefore, the necessity of crying to God, "Order my steps; take care of the little things in my life, that I sin not against You."

"Order my steps." That prayer means, "Order *my ordinary daily life*." Do not many think that religion is only something for Sundays? They put it on with their best hat and put it away when they put that hat back into the box. Believe me, that the religion which is taken up only once a week and dropped during the rest of the week is neither fit to live with nor to die with! It is like a bad bank-note—if you find such a counterfeit, you had better lay it down and run away from it—and not let anyone suspect that it ever belonged to you!

True godliness concerns the ordinary actions of daily life. Do not tell me what you can say at a Prayer Meeting. What do you do in the parlor? What do you do in the kitchen? How do you behave yourself towards your wife? How do you act towards your children? "He is a very good man," said one to me, "he is a very good man, indeed, but his children are all afraid of him." "Then," I thought, "he is *not* a good man, but a very bad man, indeed." I could not conceive him to be good—I would rather believe Rowland Hill's saying that a man was not truly converted if his cat and his dog were not the better off for it! It ought to be a blessing and it *must* be a blessing to everybody round about him if the Grace of God enters into his soul. "Order my steps in Your Word," means, "Help me to turn the common actions of my ordinary life into a hallowed service." When I put on my weekday clothes, may I be even as when a priest in the olden times put on his holy vestments and ministered before the Lord. And may everything that I do be the exercise of a sacred priesthood to the living God. The Apostle Peter's exhortation is still in force, "As He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation." So are Paul's injunctions, "Whether, therefore, you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

Thus the watchfulness included in the text concerns the little things and the ordinary things of our lives. And following the Psalmist's example, we shall especially pray about all *our advances*. It is by steps that we

go forward. This is the age of progress—everybody is crying out, "Forward!" Well, then, here is a prayer for those who wish to progress *wisely*. "O Lord, order my steps in Your Word! So shall my progress be a progress toward Yourself, a progress within the compass of Your sacred Truth." He who outruns Scripture will have to come back again. He who goes beyond the boundaries of the right road will lose his way and the more progress he makes the greater will be the distance that he will have to return if he is to reach his journey's end in peace. Pray this prayer, young man, if you want to be safe, "O Lord, order my steps in Your Word!"

There is great temptation, nowadays, to take up with anything that is new. A man buttonholes you and tells you of a new discovery that he has made. Well, hear what he has to say if you think well. "Prove all things," but, "hold fast that which is good." And be this your continual prayer, that your steps, when you take any steps, may always be ordered according to the Word of God. "Well," says one, "you tie us up pretty tightly." No, my Friend, I do not want to tie you up at all! You can roam where you like, but I know that the tighter I am tied, the better it is for me, and the happier I am. There is a prayer in the 118th Psalm which I always like to pray, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar." Lord, hold me fast from morning till night, and through the night as well! I long that You should fill my very dreams with thoughts of You! Lord, bind me fast, both winter and summer, and every day in the year! I would not have a single hour in which You did not order me and command me! Lord, bind me as to every step I take, and every advance I make, for where may I not go if I ever advance beyond Your Word? And what can be good for me if You do not count it good, and what will You withhold from me if it is really good for me?

So I commend this prayer to you, dwelling much on these two points—first, complete subservience to the Divine will, and then careful watchfulness about all the details of your life. Only turn them both into prayers! Do not say, "I am going to order my steps." Are you? Do not say, "I am going to obey God in everything." Are you? This holy road is not fit for such feet as yours while you talk like that! Until you are shod with a simple dependence upon God you will never take to this narrow way. And unless the Lord holds you up in it, you will soon either fall in it or fall from it. So make no resolutions in your own strength, but offer the prayer of our text in the name of Jesus—and the Lord will hear you.

III. In the third place, I call your attention to the COMPREHENSIVE OBEDIENCE which is desired in this text.

It has two clauses, the positive and the negative. "Order my steps in Your Word." That is, "Lord, make me positively to do the right thing!" Then, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." That is, "Lord, preserve me from any thought or word or deed which would be contrary to your mind and will!" He is the right sort of Believer who is an all-round Christian, one who is positive for doing right, but who is equally determined not to do wrong. We have some very active professors who are not, at the same time, watchful on the negative side. And we have a great many negative professors who might offer the Pharisee's prayer, "God, I

thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." They look to some extent to the negative side, but then there is nothing positive for the right, there is nothing that they are really doing to please the Lord. We need to have a Divine amalgam of the two parts of our text, "Order my steps in Your Word" and, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

With regard to this comprehensive obedience, notice that the Psalmist desires that no sin of any kind should be tolerated within his heart—"Let not *any iniquity* have dominion over me." Some men have their pet sins and some women have their darling sins. They cry to the evil things within, "Out with you, out with you all, *except this one*." There is a winking of the eye, or a lifting of the finger which means to some iniquity, "*You* may stay behind." "But, my dear Sir," says one, "have we not *all* some besetting sin?" Possibly it is so, but what *is* a besetting sin? If I were to go across a common at dead of night and half-a-dozen men met me and gathered round me, crying, "Your money or your life!" I should be beset by them. Suppose that I had to cross Clapham Common tonight and that I was thus surrounded and robbed—I should be beset by the thieves.

But suppose I went that way again tomorrow night? And on Tuesday night, and on Wednesday night, and Thursday night, and Friday night, and Saturday night? Do you think that I should be able to say that I was "beset" by the robbers? People would naturally ask, "Why did you go that way? If you are attacked and robbed once, we can understand *that*, but what do you mean by going that way again?" Here is a man who says that drinking is his besetting sin. Well, my Brother, I can understand that you were led on, by degrees, from glass to glass till you lost your balance and were overcome. You call that your besetting sin and yet you still go to the public-house! Well, that is what I call going across a common on purpose to be robbed! And I do not believe your excuse about besetting sins.

I think that I have heard many things of that character, whereby people try to excuse themselves on the ground that some sin besets them. The Black man said that drunkenness was an "*upsetting*" sin much more than a "*besetting*" sin. I think he was quite right in saying so, and there are many other upsetting sins of that kind! Men open the door and say to some iniquity or other, "Come in, you are my besetting sin." They put themselves in the way of it! They indulge themselves in it and then they talk as if they could not help it! Down on your knees and cry, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Lord, save me from it, for my desire is to obey You completely in everything without leaving anything out from under the dominion and sway of the Laws of Christ!"

IV. Now, lastly, this prayer commends itself very much to me, not only for its comprehensiveness, but because of a certain CAUTIOUS APPREHENSIVENESS which seems to lie in it.

I like the holy fear which glows within the Psalmist's prayer like the fire within an opal. He says, "Order my steps in Your Word." He means, "Lord, I am afraid to take a single step without Your orders. I am afraid to put one foot before another for fear I should go wrong!" "Happy is the man that always fears." He that was too bold was never too wise. He that

leaped before he looked, looked very sadly after he had leaped. He shall go right who knows where he is going, is careful about the road and afraid lest he should go astray. He is the man who prays, "Order my steps in Your Word."

Then notice, especially in the latter sentence, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me," how the Psalmist seems to say, "Lord, I feel that I am *liable to the very greatest iniquity.* Let not any iniquity have dominion over me!" Is this *David* praying? I think it was the man after God's own heart who wrote this Psalm—and he proved in his life that the very worst iniquities might assail him and that he might become their prey for a time. O child of God, you must pray against the blackest sin! You do not know what you may yet become if the Grace of God does not preserve you. I am always afraid of people who are so very good in their own esteem—superfine, hot-pressed perfectionism is generally very poor stuff. I had an old friend who was very cautious upon this point. He was met, one day, by a man who had been many years the deacon of a church and who said to him, "Friend So-and-So, I want you to lend me 50 pounds." He knew him right well and he was quite prepared to write a check for the amount at once but the venerable deacon said, "You know you can trust *me*. I am not a man of yesterday, I am not like young people who are easily led astray to do foolish and wicked things. I am perfectly safe."

My wise old friend then said, "I cannot lend you any money." The other man asked, "Why not?" "I never lend money to people who are so good as you are, for I should never see it again if I did." That man was head over heels in debt and failed, soon after, for an enormous amount! Yet there he stood, as bold as brass, pleading what a good man he was! So the man who says that he cannot sin and that he is beyond the power of temptation—well, the Lord have mercy upon him! He is already in the snare of the devil and it may not be long before he will have sorrowfully to find it out. No, Sir, pray, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me," for, unless you are kept by God's Grace, there is no form of iniquity which may *not* prevail against you! The Psalmist feels himself liable to fall into the greatest transgression, so he prays, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

But the prayer seems to me, also, to intimate that he felt *fearful of the least evil*. There is here, to my mind, a very sweet apprehensiveness concerning *little sins*, if there *are* such things. "Let not *any* iniquity have dominion over me. Perhaps, Lord, I shall never be a drunkard, for You have given me reason, thought and the love of sobriety, but then, Lord, what use is it if I should be guilty of covetousness, which is idolatry? Let not that iniquity have dominion over me. And if I should escape from covetousness, perhaps I may fall prey to some secret lust. Lord, if there is a leak in the ship, the ship will go down. Even if there is not a leak in the stern of the vessel, yet if there is a leak in the prow, or anywhere in her hull, that will suffice to sink her. Lord, let not *any* iniquity have dominion over me!" Suppose that I do not fall by any of these known sins, yet if I do not walk with God, if I neglect secret prayer, if I have not yielded myself fully up to the working of the Holy Spirit upon me, the result will

be the same! This prayer is necessary for every one of us—"Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

Brothers and Sisters, I am not afraid for the most of you, that you will become the prey of any overt scandalous sins, but I *am* afraid that some of you may be eaten up with dry rot—that the termites may secretly eat through you and yet leave all the skin and outside of everything just as it used to be. We have heard travelers tell that when they have gone into their rooms which they had left for some time, there stood their boxes, their sets of drawers, and their tables, just as when they left—but as soon as they have touched them, they have dropped into so much dust—for the insects had eaten all the heart of the wood away! Is it not possible for us to get into that state—to seem everything that is good, and yet the very heart of us may be eaten out? Pray, then, this prayer, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

O children of God, you who really know and love Him, be concerned about yourselves that you be not mistaken and that you do not fall under the supremacy of any evil and false thing! Cry mightily to God about this matter! Search and try yourselves and make sure work for eternity. I say this especially to myself and to all ministers, for there are so many ways in which ministers may deceive themselves. We may preach to others and yet be, ourselves, castaways. I say this, also, to you Church officers and to you revered members of the Church who have grown gray in your profession. Take heed to yourselves and everyone of you breathe this prayer, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

Then what shall I say to you who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? If the righteous are scarcely saved, where will you be found? "Oh!" says one, "I never made a profession of religion." You are proud of that, are you? Suppose you were brought before a magistrate and charged with being a thief and you said to him, "I never made a profession of being an honest man." "Oh!" he would say, "take that fellow to prison! He is convicted out of his own mouth." You never made a profession of fearing God? You never made a profession of believing in Christ—is that so, Sir? Then the Day of Judgment is almost a superfluity to you, for you have judged yourself and condemned yourself! And before long my Lord's sheriff will lay his skeleton hand upon you and arrest you in the name of that Divine Justice which you have despised! There will be no resisting him and you will have to go with him to prison and to death.

Before that dread event happens, I entreat you, by the very reasonableness of the thing, to consider, repent and turn to the Lord! Look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross, for He is the only way of salvation! Find in Him the power to hate sin and the power to conquer it, for there is no power anywhere but that which comes from His dear streaming wounds and from His ever-living Spirit. Look to Him—and when you have done so and have trusted Him—then pray this prayer to the Lord, "Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:129-144; MATTHEW 15:1-13.

Psalm 119:129. *Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.* It is very wonderful that God should speak to us at all, but still more marvelous that He should write to us such a book as this Bible. The Book itself is full of wonders and one of those wonders is that it reveals Him whose name is "Wonderful." Observe that the Psalmist, having said to the Lord, "Your testimonies are wonderful," does not add, "Therefore do I sit down and wonder at them." No, his appreciation was *practical*, let ours be the same—"Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them."

130. *The entrance of Your Words gives light.* Those who are most ignorant and have least confidence in their own abilities will, nevertheless, become very wise if they study God's Word.

130-131. *It gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.* What a wonderful verse that is! The Psalmist cannot describe his longing for God's commandments except by going to the brute creation for a suitable metaphor! He had probably seen the hunted stag stand still and pant to get its breath, all the while longing for the water brooks. So he says, "I opened my mouth, and panted." "I could not put my prayer into words, so I panted. My heart, my breath, my lungs, my very soul panted, for I longed for Your commandments."

132. *Look upon me*—That is all the Psalmist needs and all that we need, too. If a look from us to God will save us, what must a look from God to us do for us? "Look upon me"—

132-134. *And be merciful to me, as You used to do to those that love Your name. Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts.* Some of you, perhaps, may hardly be able to do as you would if you were perfectly free to act, for you are, to a certain extent, under the government and power of ungodly persons. Well, here is a prayer for you to present to the Lord. "Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts."

135. *Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.* That is the best sunshine for us! Let us but have the light of God's Countenance and nothing can put us out of countenance! If the Lord will smile, men may frown as much as they please. So we pray with the Psalmist, "Make Your face to shine upon Your servant."

135-136. *And teach me Your statues. Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law.* The Psalmist felt for others as well as for himself. It was not enough for him to be holy—he would have others to be the same. Sin in other men brought sorrow to his heart. "Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because *they* keep not Your Law."

137. *Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments.* After having wept over the sin of men, the Psalmist turns with sweet calmness of spirit to the goodness of God.

138. *Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful.* "Very faithful." You who have tried and proven God's promises must have found them so—not only faithful, but *very* faithful, faith-

ful to the letter, faithful to the moment. God seems rather to exceed His promise than ever to fall short of it.

139-140. *My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your Words. Your Word is very pure.*—Just now the Psalmist said, "Your testimonies are very faithful. Now he says, "Your Word is very pure." There is no adulteration in this blessed Book—it is the pure Truth of God. You cannot add to it or take from it without making it imperfect! "Your Word is very pure."—

140. *Therefore Your servant loves it.* It is only a pure heart that loves the pure Word of the Lord! So, if you love the Word of God because of its purity, it is an argument that your heart has been renewed by Grace!

141. *I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts.* In verse 139, the Psalmist complained that his enemies had forgotten God's Words. He does not complain of the fault in others and then fall into it, himself, but he says, "Yet I do not forget Your percepts." There are some people who seem to think that it does not much matter what they do. If they were persons of influence, they think that they would be very careful of their example. "But," says one, "I am only a feeble woman—a poor mother with a few children." "Oh," exclaims another, "I am only a child as yet, I cannot influence others!" "Oh," cries a third, "I am simply an ordinary working man, nobody notices me." Listen to what the Psalmist says, "I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts. I do not make an excuse out of my littleness, that I may be careless in my living." Take that message home, dear Friends, and learn its lesson, for it applies to many of you!

142. *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness*—What a wonderful sentence! Just now, the Psalmist said, "Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteousness." (See the marginal reading of verse 138). Now he advances another step and says, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness."

142. *And Your Law is the truth.* That is what I believe this Book of God is—"*the* truth." I know of nothing Infallible but the Bible. Every man must have a fixed point somewhere—some believe in an infallible pope, and some in an infallible church, but I believe in an Infallible Book, expounded by the Infallible Spirit who is ready to guide us into all truth—"Your Law is the truth."

143. *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet Your commandments are my delight.* What a curious mixture this verse describes! Here is a man full of trouble and anguish, and yet full of delight at the same time! Little do they understand human nature and especially gracious human nature, who cannot comprehend this paradox. There are many seemingly contradictions in the Christian life and this is one of them. "Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me"—as dogs lay hold of their prey—"yet Your commandments are my delights." The Apostle Paul pictured another such a case as this when he wrote, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." And he also described the Christian paradox, "As unknown, and yet well known, as dying and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet

always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." May we all understand these paradoxes in our own experiences!

144. *The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.* Now let us read what the Lord Jesus said to those who professed to reverence the Scripture, but who really made it void by their traditions.

Matthew 15:1. *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying.*—They had taken a journey to come and attack Him. Perhaps they had been sent as a deputation to try to thwart the Savior. What a vexation of spirit it must have been to His pure and holy mind to come into conflict with these triflers, these self-righteous, self-confident men! Why did they some to Christ? To plead with Him for the poor people who were perishing for lack of knowledge, or to ask Him how souls could be saved and how God could be glorified? Oh, no! They came to ask the Savior about a very different subject—

2. *Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* Would you have thought that full-grown men could have made it a matter of business to come from Jerusalem down into the country to talk to Christ about the fact that His disciples did not always wash their hands before they ate their breakfasts? Yet we have men, nowadays, who make a great point of what is to be done with the so-called "consecrated" bread that is left, and who are much concerned about what kind of a dress a "priest" ought to wear when he is engaged in the performance of certain duties! How sad is it that such trifles as these should occupy the minds of immortal beings while men are dying and God is dishonored!

3. *But He answered and said to them, Why do you, also, transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?* He answered their question by asking another, in which he drew the contrast between transgressing the tradition of the elders and transgressing the commandment of God!

4-6. *For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother: and, He that curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatever you might be profited by me; and honors not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.* Whatever might be said about regarding the tradition of men, God's commandment must be regarded! That stands first and, therefore, our Lord demanded of these scribes and Pharisee an answer to His charge that they had overridden and overlaid a commandment of God by a tradition of their own. If a father and mother, in great need, said to their son, "Help us, for we need bread," and he answered, "I cannot give you anything, for all I have is dedicated to God," the Rabbis taught that he might be exempted from relieving his parents, although they also said that *the next day* he might undo the dedication of his property and employ it exactly as he pleased. He might use the fact that he had said, "That shekel is for God," as a reason for not giving it to his father who was in need—and then, the very next day—he might take that shekel and

spend it exactly as he chose. So God's commandment to honor, and love, and aid our parents was set aside by their tradition.

7-9. *You hypocrites! Well did Elijah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near to Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Our Lord never flattered anybody! See how honestly and in what plain terms He addressed these scribes and Pharisees! Yet these were the great teachers of His day and thought themselves the bright light of the age, the very leaders of the people in all that was good! But Christ addressed them as, "You hypocrites," and gave them a text of Scripture which clearly applied to them. They had all manner of outward forms of worship. They talked very much about the Bible—they studied every Word of it and even counted the letters in every chapter—but they had no regard to the real meaning of God's Word! And their heart was not right with the Lord. The Savior patiently talked with them, but He also sternly rebuked them and denounced them as hypocrites.

10. *And He called the multitude.* As much as if He had said to the scribes and Pharisees, "I cannot waste My time arguing with you. I am going to talk to these poor people who are perishing and I shall have more hope of doing good among the multitude than among you, though you consider yourselves the aristocracy of the church."

10, 11. *And said to them, Hear, and understand: not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* This was not very clear at first, it needed to be thought over and well considered. The Savior dropped it into the popular mind, like a seed, and left it to grow and develop in due season.

12. *Then came His disciples, and said to him, Do You know that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?* The wonder was that they were not offended before! It certainly was not a matter of concern to Christ whether they were offended or not—He would not tone down the Truth of God in order to please them.

13. *But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.* Every teacher whom God has not sent will find his teaching contradicted by Christ. The Truth of God is like a spade—it turns up the soil for that life to grow in it which should grow—and it is also the means of killing the weeds. "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." May we all be plants of His right-hand planting! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (VERSION III), 119 (SONG II), 575.

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

CHRIST'S LOVE TO HIS SPOUSE
NO. 2488

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 25, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1886.

"Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." Ephesians 5:25.

THE love of Jesus—what a theme it is! The Apostle said that it passes knowledge and if it passes knowledge, much more does it excel any description that can be given of it! The heart may feel it better than the tongue may speak it. If there is one subject more than another upon which I wish always to speak, it is the love of Christ. But if there is one which quite baffles me and makes me go back from this platform utterly ashamed of my poor feeble words, and of the tongue which has uttered them, it is this subject. This love of Christ is the most amazing thing under Heaven, if not in Heaven itself. How often have I said to you that if I had heard that Christ pitied us, I could understand it. If I had heard that Christ had mercy upon us, I could comprehend it. But when it is written that he actually *loves* us, that is quite another and a much more extraordinary thing! Love between mortal and mortal is quite natural and comprehensible, but love between the Infinite God and us poor sinful finite creatures, though conceivable in one sense, is utterly inconceivable in another. Who can grasp such an idea? Who can fully understand it? Especially when it comes in this form—"HE" (read it in large capitals) "loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*"—this is the miracle of miracles!

I feel the more embarrassed with my subject, at the very onset, because this love of Christ is here positively likened to the love of a husband to his wife, and is so likened to it as to be made the model of what the husband's love to his wife should be! "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." I should never have dared to draw the comparison, nor should any man have drawn it, but that the Holy Spirit, Himself, moved the pen of Paul to write it, and this being the case, we shall not be intruding into the secret places of the Most High if we now enter upon the consideration of this wondrous theme! Verily, I may well say, as the Apostle does in the 32nd verse, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." It is a mystery, a subject far too deep for the mere intellect to dive into its depths—and too sacred for us to think or speak of except with utmost solemnity of heart. How shall I order my speech in the presence of such a subject as this? How shall I be free and yet be guarded?

How shall I take you to the edge of this great sea of the Truth of God and even venture into it without getting, at once, over my head?

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church"—a parallel is drawn between poor mortals like ourselves who occupy the position of husbands and our glorious Lord who is God Over All, blessed forever! In boundless condescension He deigns to occupy the same kind of place in reference to His Church, which He calls His bride, He Himself, being the Bridegroom who is soon to come! Again I say that I should never have thought of such a comparison had not the Holy Spirit, Himself, put it before us and invited us to consider it.

So, dear Friends, with great reverence, let us think, first, of *how Christ loves the Church.* Then, secondly, *how He has proved His love by giving Himself for the Church.* And then, thirdly, let us make the practical enquiry, *how shall we think of this wondrous love of Christ?*

I. First, then, HOW DOES CHRIST LOVE HIS CHURCH?

I cannot help beginning by saying that *Christ loves His church specially.* There would be no parallel whatever between the husband's love to the wife and Christ's love to the Church if there were not a specialty about it. Christ is Love itself—He is full of kindness and benevolence. In that sense, He loves *all* mankind, but that *cannot* be the meaning of the text, for it would be a very strange kind of exhortation to the husband if that were the case. No, the husband's love to his spouse is something special and particular—and it stands quite alone and all by itself. He will be kind and benevolent and generous towards all others, but that love which he lavishes upon his wife he must give to nobody else in the world. It is certainly so with our blessed Lord. Free and rich and overflowing in loving kindness, yet He made a special choice of His people before the earth was. And having chosen because of His love, He loves because of His choice, and that love is a peculiar, special, remarkable, pre-eminent love such as He bestows upon no one else of all the human race! It must be so, or else the passage would be all but immoral! Certainly it would be manifestly incorrect.

There is, then, a special love which Christ has towards His own Church, towards all Believers, towards His chosen people, towards those whom His Father gave Him, of whom He says, "They are Mine." I may invite each of you who are included in either of these descriptions to drink in the sweetness of that gracious text, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." That means, "I have loved you with a special and peculiar and distinguishing love." As many of us as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are distinguished by the enjoyment of a love which is all our own! Dear fellow Christians, let us never forget this amazing love and, as Christ loves us so specially, let us feel that we are bound to love Him specially. Let us give to Him all our heart's selection, for He is a jealous Savior and He will have all our love. So let us render it to Him, not of compulsion, but with a joyous willingness! Love dies in the presence of compulsion—it will wear no chains except its own silken fetters. But it flies, oh, how swiftly, on its own strong wings when once it perceives its beloved objective. Christ loves His church, then, specially, as good John Kent sings—

"He loved the world of His elect,

With love surpassing thought.
Nor will His mercy ever neglect
The souls so dearly bought."

And, next, I ask you to notice what is not always the case with regard to the husband and the wife, that *the Lord Jesus loves His church unselfishly.* That is to say, He never loved her for what she has, but what she is. No, I must go further than that and say that He loved her, not so much for what she is, but what He *makes her as the object of His love*. He loves her not for what comes to Him from her, or with her, but for what He is able to bestow upon her! His is the strongest love that ever was, for He has loved unseemliness till He has changed it into beauty! He has loved the sinner till He has made him a saint. He has loved the foul and filthy till He has washed them with water by the Word of God and presented them to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. We love because of loveliness apprehended and perceived, but Christ loved because He would impart His own loveliness to the object of His choice. Even the best of men, doubtless, love in some measure from selfish motives. There is some mixture of self-interest in all human love, but Christ had nothing to gain by loving His Church. He was very God of very God, the adored of angels and the Beloved of the Father, yet He fixed the eyes of His love—mark you, not of His *pity*, merely, but of His *love*—upon those whom He had chosen out of the race of men! He loved them, not for anything that He could ever gain from them, for He had all things in Himself, but because of what He would impart to them! They had nothing of good in themselves and were only fit to be loved by Christ because, like empty vessels, their very emptiness fits them to be receivers of His fullness. In no other sense are we ever fit to be loved by Christ. As the sun chased the darkness away from the world and still prevents it from going back into the darkness, so did Christ love a poor, fallen, darkened company of mortals, and loved them into light, and love, and joy, and still loves and enlightens them and keeps them where they are. Oh, what a wondrous love is this! Let our souls rejoice and be glad therein.

Further, Brothers and Sisters, as Christ's love to His Church is a love of choice, and of specialty, and of marvelous unselfishness, so I believe—although I do not understand how it can be so—that *it is a love of complacency*. The husband's love to his wife is not the love of a parent to a child. It is not the love of the philanthropist to the object of distress that he relieves. It is something very different from either of these forms of love. It may be that the husband confers benefits upon his wife as the result of his love, and he should do so. But still, the love of the husband to the wife puts them somehow on a level with one another. She has complacency in him and he has complacent delight in her. If a husband only loved his wife with a feeling of pity towards her, with the notion of relieving her, and so forth, that would be a very poor kind of relationship!

And though I speak with bated breath as I say it, I believe that the blessed Lord Christ takes complacency in His people. That we should delight ourselves in Him, is very easy to understand, but that He should delight Himself in us, oh, the very thought of it is ravishing to my heart! Even in the Old Testament Scripture, our Lord said to His chosen, "You

shall be called Hephzibah," that is, "My delight is in her." Is it really so, that the infinite God takes delight in His chosen people? Here is another passage to confirm it—"My delights were with the sons of men." Does Jesus find delight in men? Yes, that He does, and you know how He said to those who were the representatives of His church in His lifetime on earth, "I have called you friends," and He did seem to find a solace in their company. Even when He had risen from the dead and had no more work to do for their redemption, yet He came to them that He might enjoy their society. Poor, fallible, half-instructed men they were, yet He found His pleasure in them! He used to speak of them in this way, "I will declare your name to My brethren." He is not ashamed to call us brethren and in that rapturous Song of Songs, which is the very Holy of Holies of our blessed Bible, He does not hesitate to speak of His beloved as His *spouse* and to use to her all those endearing terms which prove that He takes great delight in her.

Think of it, my Soul, that Jesus takes great delight in you! He became a Man and it was not good even for such a Man to be alone. He could not rest till He had found you out and had wooed and won you! Will you ever deny Him your company? Will you refuse Him your heart of hearts? Will you hide from Him the secret of your soul? If so, you do a grievous wrong to Him who has deigned to stoop from the Throne of His eternal Glory to take delight in the company of His creature, man! I have looked abroad upon creation and have seen all kinds of beautiful birds and intelligent beasts, yet have I never seen any towards which I would stoop to make them my intimate acquaintances—and marry them in the heart of my love! No, we would not stoop even that little distance! But we were infinitely below the Son of God, yet has He chosen us! He felt that He could link His destiny with ours—I put it not too strongly, for that is what He has really done! He has become the Head of His body, the Church. He has become the Husband of His chosen bride. He has, as it were, entered into the same boat with His people. He has made a household whereof we two are the companion parts—He the Husband and His Church the spouse. Oh, who shall tell it all out? I do but touch the surface of this boundless sea as with a swallow's wing—happy are you if you dare to plunge into its depths.

There is, then, between Christ and His Church, to make a parallel between the love of the husband to his wife, a love of complacency.

And being a love of complacency, in such a case as this, there is *an intense love of sympathy*. The true husband and wife are so united that they share each other's joys and sorrows without making any effort to do so. It comes naturally to them, they cannot avoid it. And oh, let us tell out this great Truth of God—the sympathy between Christ and His people is absolutely perfect! If He sees us in sorrow, He feels it in His heart. He was Himself encompassed with infirmity, when He was here, and tempted in all points like as we are, that He might know all the trials of the Church He loved. And now in Heaven, as He has shared our sorrows, He decrees that we shall share His joys! He wishes us, even now, to let our hearts beat in sympathy with His triumph and His victory. I wish we

would do so, why should we not? Our Husband is on the Throne—then let us begin to reign with Him! He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies—then let us have faith enough to claim what is really ours in Him! Remember that quaint couplet of which good old Rowland Hill was so fond, and sing it yourself—

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

Still better, remember that Word of Power which fell from our Lord's blessed lips while here below, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory." He has a perfect sympathy with us and we should have a like sympathy with Him. Blessed be His dear name that He should ever have entered into such bonds of love as those with such poor creatures as we are!

Nor is that all. While it is very blessed to know that Christ has this love of sympathy, He has, further, *a love of communion*. Without this, there could be no parallel with domestic life which includes much of happy communion and loving conversation. A brother minister said to me, the other day, when we were talking to one another about what the Gospel has done for men, "Did you ever think what a wonderful thing the Gospel is, that it has made possible such happiness as you and I enjoy in our domestic relationships?" And of course I heartily responded to that remark, for if there is anything that is a miniature picture of Heaven upon earth, it is a pair of Christians happily united, whose children grow up in the fear of the Lord and render to them increased comfort and joy every day! Oh, how much some of us owe to the Gospel for the happiness of our homes! There could, however, be no such happiness in married life if there were no conversation, no communion—and our Lord Jesus Christ so loves His Church that He often converses with her. He so loves each one of His people that if we are only willing to have it so, we may walk with Him, we may talk with Him and He will speak with us as a man speaks with his friend. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, if you do not, *every day*, commune with Christ, whose fault is it? Not His, but yours, for He loves you so that He would never let you be away from Him if you were not so wayward, and so easily turned aside by little things. Yes, He manifests Himself to us as He does not to the world. I am not going to tell out, here, all that He says—all the ways in which He manifests Himself to His people, we could not tell. But there are times of such real delight in fellowship with the Lord Jesus that we can only say with Dr. Watts—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

The pith of all that I have said—and I have much more to say than time will permit—is this—it is an extraordinarily thing that *Christ has entered into positive unity with His people*. Unity, mark you for that is the essence of the marriage bond. We are one with Christ, who made Himself one with His people. Have you ever realized this, even you who are the best-tutored of the children of God? Have you ever taken a firm hold of this great Truth of God and gripped it so that you will not let it go? Come

back to what I said a little while ago, that Christ has linked His destiny with yours, His honor with yours, His life with yours, His happiness with yours! You must be in Heaven, or else He will be bereaved! You must be in Heaven, or else He will be imperfect! You are a member of His body and if He should lose one of His members, then His body would not be perfect, nor the Head either! You are joined to the Lord and you are "one spirit" with Him, and you may bravely say, "Who shall separate us?" for such is this eternal union that there is no separation between Christ and the soul that is joined to Him.

"The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." In the olden times, the husband might give his wife a letter of divorce and put her away. But God says that He hates putting away and He will never divorce those who are joined to Him. What a marriage this is! Do you know, dear Friend, what I am talking about? I cannot speak of it as I would, but it is true, and that is the wonder of it! It is no fiction, no myth, no mere figure of speech, but it is *really* so in deed and in truth. For this cause Christ left His Father and became one with His Church, that henceforth they should no more be two, but one. And now we who have believed in Christ Jesus are one with Him in time and to eternity! His love has made it so and we may paraphrase the words we read, just now, and say, "Behold, what manner of love the Bridegroom has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the spouse of Christ!"

I have but very imperfectly spoken upon this part of my subject, but I must not linger longer on this most delightful theme.

II. I now ask you briefly to notice HOW THE LORD JESUS PROVED HIS LOVE TO HIS CHURCH—"Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it."

I will not at first restrict the meaning of this text to what is the real essence of it, but I will just observe that Christ *gave Himself for His church when He was born into the world*, when He did not disdain the virgin's womb, but was born of Mary, wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger. The angels have never ceased to wonder at this great mystery of godliness! The God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who upholds all things by the word of His power, lay as an Infant in the manger of Bethlehem because there could be no manifestation of His love to His people unless it could be said that they two were one flesh! So He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, most surely and truly Man, with all the sinless infirmities of our nature, and liable even to death in order to be fully one with us. Oh, how really He gave Himself for us when He thus became a Babe, a Child, a Man!

That being done, *He gave all His life here on earth for us*. He did nothing for Himself—it was all for us, for His Church. His whole life was for her righteousness, for her example, for her teaching and for her quickening. He loved her with no view but the Glory of the Father by the salvation of His chosen.

Nor was that all. It was, indeed, but the beginning! Having given His Godhead by the assumption of our humanity, having given His life by spending it all for us, *Christ gave Himself up to death for our sins*. He

went up to the felon's gallows—the Cross of Calvary—and there He gave His hands and feet to the nails, and His heart to the spear. Laying down His body for us, but at the same time laying down His soul and spirit, He suffered that dread doom of being forsaken of His God, so that He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There, when you see His pale body, like a withered lily broken at the stalk—when you see the holy men and women wrapping Him in spices and laying Him in Joseph's tomb—you understand how He loved us and gave Himself for us, dying in our place, a Propitiation and Atonement for our sins! He loved us so as to die for us! He could not have died had He not become Man, but being found in fashion as a Man, and partaking of our human nature, it was possible for Him to prove the utmost extent of His love by laying down His life for us. Oh, could you not kiss those dear cold feet? Do you not half wish that you could have been there to wrap Him in the spices and fine linen and to lay Him in the grave? But remember that He now lives! Our heavenly Lover lives! He has proved His love by giving up His life, but now He has His life back and He has gone Home to His Father—He has gone back to the royalties He left and put on, again, all the splendor which for a while He laid aside.

Yet He does not love us any the less, *for He still gives Himself for us*. He acts the part of Intercessor for His Church. For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace. And for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. Nor will He—He is crowned that His Church may be crowned. He is enthroned that she, too, may come to the Throne and He will further prove His love, by-and-by, for He has so given Himself for us that He is bound to come again—to fetch Home His affianced when she is prepared for Him and Heaven above is prepared for her! Then shall He come in all His Glory and she shall be brought to Him in raiment of needlework, in all the splendor of His righteousness and forever and ever shall there be nothing but joy and blessedness!

What I am driving at, and what I want every Christian here to get at, is this thought. Whatever Jesus Christ is—and you do not know half of what He is, even you who know most of Him—whatever Christ is in any relationship, or from any point of view, He has given Himself to us! Not merely has He given His thoughts, His actions, His wisdom, His power and His wealth but *He has given Himself to us*. Oh, I like to think of this! All that I can imagine Christ to be must still fall far short of Himself! It is Himself that we love and I would sooner have Christ than have Heaven! It is Himself we love and I would sooner have Christ than His crown! It is Himself we love and I would sooner have Christ than all the golden streets! It is Himself that we love and it is Himself that belongs to us—not merely the sight of His eyes, but His eyes themselves! Not only the love of His heart, but His heart itself! Himself, His Godhead and His Manhood, the complex Person of the Christ of God is given to His Church!

I feel as if I do not know how to talk at all about this great Truth of God. Some Brother cried out this morning when I was speaking, and I noticed that somebody else immediately followed him. But oh, if ever

there is a time for crying out—and yet, on the other hand, if ever there is a time for being struck with silence—it is when we get on this topic of Christ's love to His people! I feel as if I need to run from this platform and go home—and shut the door and sit down—and weep to the praise of this mighty love! And then I should want to get up and run back, again, and say, "What a fool I was not to tell you all I could about it!" May God the Holy Spirit help you to realize it! That you are loved by anyone is a joy, for love is a precious thing, whoever gives it. But you, Believer, are loved by Christ! You are so loved by Christ as not merely to be espoused to Him, but united to Him in eternal wedlock! You are joined to Him in such a way that you must, by-and-by, be with Him in all the Glory of His royal estate, for the King will bring His queen home and He will bring you home to dwell with Him forever and ever! I am very sorry for those who do not know anything about this great love! I am truly sorry for you outsiders—

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too!"

If they did but imagine the sweetness of the love of Christ, they would never give rest to their eyes until they had looked to Him by faith and so had learned it, and known it for themselves!

III. Now, lastly, dear Friends, if such is the love of Jesus, and the way in which He has proved it, HOW OUGHT WE TO THINK OF IT? I hardly need suggest to God's people anything about this, for you know it already, your own hearts have outrun my words.

How should we think of the love of Christ? Why, *with deepest gratitude*. Oh, how could You love *me*, my Lord, You whose eyes outshine the light of the morning? How could You love *me*, You who can make the fairest of all things with a wish of Your heart? How could You love *me* in whom there was nothing fair, nothing worthy of Your love? Yet I do bless You for it. Do not all of you who love Him say in your hearts, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name, that ever He should love *me*"? It is not His benefits that you have to think of just now, though they are innumerable. It is not His mercies that you have to think of at this moment, though they are immeasurable. But it is that He has loved *you* and that He still loves *you*, and that He has given Himself to *you* and for *you*! That is the point. Do you not bless Him? Do you not feel as if you could lie at His feet, ah, and love the very dust He trod upon, when you think that ever He should love *you*? Very well, then, return to Him your gratitude.

But that is not half enough. The next thing is, *render to Him your obedience*. Does not the Scripture say that the wife is to be obedient to her husband? Well, in this case, shall we not prove our gratitude to Christ by a complete obedience to Him? Is there anything that He commands you to do? Can you neglect it after such love as this? The least of His ordinances, will you not observe them? The smallest of His precepts, will you not regard them? Is there a word of His lips that you dare despise? Is there a wish that He has expressed in the Scriptures that you would fail to carry out? I hope not! Such love as Christ has given to us ought to receive from us, without any exhortation, a complete and perfect obedience

even to every jot and tittle as far as we can render it. I do not understand that love to Christ which makes men pick and choose and say, "I shall not attend to that, for that is non-essential. I shall do *this*—I believe that it is wrong, but still, I daresay it does not matter much." No, no, no! True wives act not so to their husbands! There is no wish of a loving husband which a loving wife would not regard. No, more—she *anticipates* his wishes, she delights to make him happy—and so should it be with my heart towards my Lord. I should be looking out for what I can do for Him. I should be hunting high and low to find something that would give Him pleasure and, above all, since He says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," my heart should answer, "Your commandments are not grievous. It is my delight to do Your will, O my God and my Savior." That is the spirit in which to act towards Christ.

Once more. There is a text which says, "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." I have sometimes thought that must be somewhat difficult for some wives to do. There has not been very much to reverence in their husbands. Still, they are bound to do it as far as it is possible. In this case, there is *everything* to reverence in our Beloved! There is *nothing* about Him but deserves our most profound homage. Such an One as He, whose very name has music in it, whose very Person is the delight of seraphim and cherubim—He, the Christ whom none can conceive of in all His fullness but the Father—we must reverence Him and bow before Him and extol Him!

I grow angry, I confess it, when I hear some men speak of Christ. They talk of my Lord in these days as if He were some common person and they have "comparative religions" in which they compare Him with I know not whom! I love my Lord so well that I must boil over with indignation when His name is disparaged. Our hymn says—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus."

It is almost too commonplace an expression in reference to Him! Still, what it means let us do. Let us be ready, like the armed men who were about the bed of Solomon, to defend our King against all comers, for, if He loved us so much, we must love Him in return.

And what else shall we say? If such is the love of Christ, how shall we think of it but in a way of holiness? *Let us seek to be like He is.* Let us try to fulfill His will that He may purify us and sanctify us by the washing of water by the Word, that we may be holy as He who has called us is holy. Let us think of this love by striving after sanctification and let us think of this love, above all, by rendering to Him, now, and as long as we live, the full love of our heart. We cannot love Him without being moved to love Him more. We can love the more by thinking much of the Person towards whom our hearts are drawn, so think much of my Lord, think of Him every day! Get to be familiar with Him. Read frequently the story of His life and death. Get alone as often as you can and picture Him before your eyes until you find your heart exclaiming, "I love You, dearest Lord. You know all things. You know that I love You." I find it a profitable form of devotion, sometimes, to sit quite still and not say a word, but just *think* of Him. My heart has burned within me while doing that and I believe that it is not lost or wasted time, but time most profitably spent, for I

come forth from my chamber and feel, "Now I am ready for the service of life—or for its suffering—for I have seen the Well-Beloved and the glances of His countenance have charmed away my grief and prepared me to take up my cross and follow Him wherever He goes." Oh, love the Lord, you His saints and, as long as you live, love Him more and more, love Him to the very utmost, till you die of love! Blessed, forever blessed be His holy name! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 3.

I have read this chapter many times in your hearing, but we cannot read it too often, for it is full of the deepest and most important instruction. God grant that fresh light from above may shine upon it as we listen once more to the familiar words!

Verse 1. *Behold*—If you never used your eyes to good purpose before, use them so now!

1. *What manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* Let the truth of our adoption amaze us—the adoption of such unworthy ones as we were to so high a relationship—"that we should be called the *sons of God*."

1. *Therefore the world us knows not, because it knew Him not.* There is no need to say to whom this last sentence refers. The pronoun, "Him," is quite sufficient to indicate our Lord Jesus whom the world knew not. Every living, loving heart must at once have thought of, "Him," who is the chief, the First-Born, the only-begotten Son of God!

2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.*—It is enough to make the lame man leap as a hart to hear that blessed statement and to know it to be true!

2. *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 proportion to our view of Christ is our likeness to Him. Those who never saw Him are not like He is at all. Those who have, in a measure, seen Him, are in a measure like He is, they who see Him as He is are like He is. There is a transforming power about the image of Christ when it is seen by the soul—"We shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is."

3. *And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.* Discouragement and despair will not purify you. Doubt and darkness will only make you worse than you were before. But the indulgence of this blessed hope that you are to be like Christ will help you to purify yourself, "even as He is pure." Therefore, Beloved, have hope in God! Remember that it is one of Satan's tricks and snares to try to discourage you, but it is God's will to increase your hope, for thereby you increase in purity.

4. *Whoever commits sin, transgresses, also, the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law.* This is the best definition of sin that can be given—let none of us ever tolerate any other idea of sin but that it is "the transgression of the Law of God."

5, 6. *And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whoever abides in Him sins not: whoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him.* That is to say, if sin is the habitual course of our life, we do not truly know the Lord. He who walks with God endeavors with all his might to be free from sin and he is sanctified by abiding in Christ.

7. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* Because you are little, you are apt to be deceived. There is a great blessedness in being little children, but there is also some danger connected with such a condition, so we must beware of those who would deceive us.

7. *He that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* The test of a man's real character must be what he *does*, not what he professes! Not what he boasts of, but what is really the manner of his life.

8, 9. *He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* He sins not with any pleasure, it is not the course of his life. There are, alas, in the best of men, infirmities and imperfections and failures! Would God these were all removed! Still, the man is not what he used to be, Though he is not what he *shall* be, he is not what he once was.

10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.* Holiness and love are the marks of the true child of God. And where these are not to be found, a man must not bolster himself up with any notion that salvation is his, for he is no child of God.

11, 12. *For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that Wicked One, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.* So that, when you see a man filled with hate and envy and malice, it is because his own life is not holy. There is no exception to this rule—true holiness and love always go together—where love is absent, holiness must be absent, too.

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you.* See, Cain hated Abel and the world hates the saints. It is the very nature and spirit of the world to hate those who are not of the world.

14. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.* Love becomes the distinguishing mark of the new life.

14. *He that loves not his brother abides in death.* No matter though he may be outwardly religious, and may think that by doing certain external actions he will save himself, there is no truth at all in his religion, for the very essence of true religion is that a man lives not to himself, but to God and for the good of his fellow men.

15. *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.* He would get rid of that brother if he could and he is, therefore, a murderer in spirit, for the essence of murder is not the dagger or the poison, but the *desire* to put out of existence or to do the utmost harm to the one who is hated. The essential element of murder lurks within the bosom of all hatred.

15. *And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* His action is Cain-like. He is not of the chosen seed. He has not the life of God abiding in him.

16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God.*—The master love, the chief love that was ever in this world—

16-19. *Because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's good, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him.* That is still the test—truthful love proves that "we are of the truth." Children of the God of Truth and so assures and tranquillizes our hearts before Him. Our hearts shall be calm, confident and happy before God when we know that true love flows within them.

20-23. *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.* Faith works by love. We believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, God's well-beloved and only-begotten Son and that faith leads us to love all who bear His holy name.

24. *And He that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.* If He has given us the Spirit of Christ, then Christ Himself is in us! If He has given us the Spirit of love, that also is the evidence that Christ, Himself, abides in us. Oh, for more of that blessed Spirit in every one of us!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—423, 371.

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SINGING SAINTS
NO. 2489

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 3, 1886.

"Sing to the LORD, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."
Psalm 30:4.

DAVID had been seriously ill and the Lord had graciously restored him to health. He says, "O Lord my God, I cried to You and You have healed me. O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave: You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit." As soon as he has recovered his health and strength, the holy instincts of the man lead him to praise the Lord. The first thing to do, when the throat is clear after an illness, is to sing praises to God! The first thing to do, when the eyes are brightened again, is to look up to the Lord with thankfulness and gratitude. Some people need to be told this, but the Psalmist did not—it came to him as a matter of course. Now that he was restored, he would take his place among the heavenly choristers and sing to Jehovah. He was not satisfied to sing alone, what child of God is? Among the birds in the springtime, when the first one wakes in the morning and begins to sing, does he not call up his fellows? Is not his song an invitation to all the feathered songsters of the grove to join with him and pour out their united harmony? In like manner, it is characteristic of a praiseful heart that it naturally desires society in praise. We do not like to praise God alone—we *can* do it and we *will* do it if we must—but our heart often cries aloud to our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, "Praise to the Lord." Our very, "Hallelujah," is intended to stir up others to this holy exercise, for it means, "Praise you the Lord."

My one desire, just now, is that those of us who have received special mercy from God should praise His name and then that all the rest, if there are any who have not received such remarkable mercies as others of us have, should also feel exhorted to join in the sacred song of thankfulness to our God!

This is a duty which is pleasant—there is nothing more delightful than to sing praises to the Lord. It is also a duty that is profitable—it will be as blessed to yourself as it will be pleasing to God. Singing has a curative effect upon many of the maladies of the soul. I am sure that it lightens the burdens of life and I was about to say that it shortens the weary way of duty if we can but sing as we travel along it. This holy employment is pleasant and profitable and it is preparatory for another world and a higher state! I like to sing with Dr. Watts—

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

We are on the way to Glory, so let us sing as we journey there and, as the lark, ascending up to Heaven's gate sings as she soars, her wings keeping time with her music and mounting in her song as she rises through the air, so let it be with us—every day a Psalm, every night a day's march nearer Home, a little nearer to Heaven's music and a little better imitation of it! Let us sing, now, in our hearts if not with our lips, and when the time comes, let us join our lips with our hearts and sing to the Lord! That is our text, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

It strikes me that our text is very suitable for a communion Sabbath evening. We are about to gather at this table whereon are spread the memorials of our Savior's death. And there are three things about the text which make me think it a very proper one for such an occasion. They are, first, *the peculiar fitness of the exhortation to our present engagement*—"Sing to the Lord." Secondly, *the special suitability of the subject for our meditation*—"The remembrance of His holiness." Then, thirdly, *the admirable suitability of the company invited to join in the song* for they are the same people who are invited to sit down at the table—"Sing to the Lord, O you *saints* of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

I. So, first, let us consider THE PECULIAR FITNESS OF THE EXHORTATION TO OUR PRESENT ENGAGEMENT—"Sing to the Lord."

You are to come to the table where you remember your Savior's death, where you are to feed upon the memorials of His passion. Come there with a heart prepared for song. "Oh," says one, "I thought I had better come with tears." Yes, come with tears—they will be very sweet to Christ if you let them fall upon His feet to wash them with your penitential streams. "Oh, Sir," says another, "I thought that surely I must come with deep solemnity." So you must. Woe be to you if you come in any other way, but do you know of any divorce between solemnity and joy? I do not. Levity is akin to sorrow and soon curdles into it—the laugh is but superficial—and just below the surface lies the sigh. But he who is calmly, quietly, soberly thoughtful, is the man in whom there may be deeps of joy which can never be fathomed. There is a little shallow joy that goes prattling over the pebbles of the brook and is soon gone. I invite you not to that sort of mirth, but to that deep solemn joy which godly men feel and which can be fittingly expressed in holy song. "Sing to the Lord." That is no frivolous music! "Sing to the Lord." That is no ballad or ditty—it is a *Psalm*—deep, solemn, profound. And the joy of it is great. "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His."

"Still," you say to me, "we do not quite see the suitability of singing at this Communion Table." Well, then, if you do not, I think you soon will, for I remind you that at this table, we celebrate *a work accomplished*. Solomon said, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." The joy is not in the sowing, but in the reaping! Our Lord bids us put bread and wine upon the table to show that His work is finished by His

death. There is the bread and there is the wine—they are distinct and separate. They indicate the flesh and the blood, but the blood separate from the flesh—a sure mark that death has taken place. It is Christ's death that we celebrate by this communion and that death has written across it these words, "It is finished!" He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do and, therefore, He gave up the ghost. I rejoice that Christ's death is an accomplished fact! We have sung, in plaintive tones, with an almost bleeding heart, the sad story of the Cross, and nails, and spear, and crown of thorns. And it has been a sweet relief to us when the poet has led us to sing—

"No more the bloody spear,
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell itself shakes at His name
And all the heavens adore."

It is an infinite satisfaction to us that—

"The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now."

All the shame and sorrow are done with. All that is over and we come to this table to eat this bread and to drink of this cup in memory of a glorious work, an unrivalled work, a work which cost the Savior His life, but a work that is complete and perfect and accepted of God! Talk of the labors of Hercules? What are those compared with the toil of the Christ of God? Talk of the conquests of Caesar? What are those beside the victories of Christ who has led captivity captive and received gifts for men? Beloved, I think that no music can be too loud, too pleasant, too joyous, as we gather about this table and say, one to another, "We are celebrating the full accomplishment of that which Jesus undertook to do when He was born at Bethlehem, when He lived at Nazareth, when He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane and died on the Cross at Calvary." Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His!"

I think I see another reason also why we should come to this table with holy song and that is not only because of a work accomplished but because of *a result realized*, at least in a measure. Look, Sirs. Instead of flesh, I see bread. Instead of blood, I see wine. I know that the bread and the wine are symbols of the flesh and the blood, but I also know that they are something more—they are not only symbols of the things, themselves—but also of that which comes out of those things. This is what I mean. This day, because Christ has died, a table is spread for the starving souls of men. God keeps open house. Like a great king, He sets His table in the street, sends out His servants and bids them invite the hungry, the poor, the needy, the thirsty, to come and eat and drink and be satisfied. And, inasmuch as maddened and besotted by their sin, they will not come, He adds this command, "*Compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled."

And, Brothers and Sisters, when you and I gather around this table, if we have, indeed, come to Christ *spiritually*, He sees in us a part of the reward of His sufferings! The festival has been going on these 1800 years. Relays of guests have been continually feasting at the Table of the great King who says, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed," and His guests are still coming, myriads of them, who would all have

died if they had not lived by feeding upon Christ! They would have all been lost if they had not been saved by the precious blood of Jesus! They are still coming and our prophetic eyes see, in the companies that are gathering together this Sabbath all over the world, the vanguard of a mightier host that no man can number, out of every nation, kindred, tribe, people and tongue! Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His." The very setting up of the Communion Table and the gathering of men and women to it that they may spiritually feast upon their dying Lord is a reason for thankfulness!

There is, in the third place, this reason why some of us should sing to the Lord, for here is a *blessing enjoyed*. Not only are many coming in various parts of the world and feeding spiritually upon the flesh and blood of the Crucified, but it is a special joy that you and I are also here. I am glad, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you are here. It is a great joy to me that my brother in the flesh should be here and it is a great delight that many of you with whom I have lived so long in happy fellowship should be here. But I could not afford *not* to be here myself! If I had to go away at the close of the service and leave you to commune with the Lord—and I had no part nor lot in the matter—I should have to miss an exceedingly great joy! You who love the Lord, will you look back to the days when you did not know Him, but when you longed to know Him? There was a time when you sighed and cried for Him and if anybody had said to you, "You will sit with the great company at the Communion in the Tabernacle on such a night, and the Lord Jesus will be very precious to you, and your heart will be brimming over with delight," you would have said, "I am afraid that is too good to be true! I cannot expect it ever to be *my* case." There was a time with me when, if I might but have been the least dog under Christ's Table and have picked up the crumbs and the stale crusts, and the bones that others despised, I would have licked His feet for very joy! Yet now, lo, here I sit among His children and am one of them! And I have the pleasure of passing to you, my Brothers and Sisters, the sweet dainties which He put on the Table—and if you do not sing, I must! If none of you will sing, I shall have to sing alone! I cannot help it. But I believe that each one of you feels the same wonder, delight and gratitude to think that you, also, are here.

There is yet another matter to sing about in coming to this table, for this Communion reminds us of *a hope revived*. What said the Apostle Paul concerning this ordinance? "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes." This is one of the tokens which our Lord has given us that He *will come again*! In effect, He says, "Eat that bread, drink of that cup, and I will be coming nearer and nearer every time that you thus assemble around My Table." Well now, if you did not sing last time, you ought to sing at the thought that Jesus is coming again! He has not gone away forever. According to the Scriptures He has not gone for long. Every hour brings Him nearer and it cannot, now, be very long before He will be back again. Remember what the two men in white apparel said to the disciples, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come"—literally and personally—"in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven."

As surely as Jesus lives, His feet will stand in the latter day upon Mount Olivet and He will come to gloriously reign among His ancients! This Second Coming of our Lord, not as a Sin-Offering, not in shame and humiliation, but in all the Glory of His Father and of His holy angels, makes us strike together with a joyous clash the high-sounding cymbals! We already anticipate the final triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ when all His enemies shall bow before Him. It will be, it *shall* be, and this supper is the memorial that it *certainly* shall be! Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His!"

I think I have given good proof that this exhortation well befits our present engagement.

II. Now, secondly, dear Friends, notice THE SPECIAL SUITABILITY OF THE SUBJECT FOR OUR MEDITATION—"Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

It needs a holy man to give thanks at the remembrance of a holy God. Sinners hate holiness because they dread holiness, but the saints love holiness because they have no cause to dread it and because, on the other hand, it has become a fountain of comfort and joy to them.

I want you, at this Table, to think, first, of *Divine holiness vindicated*. God loved us, Brothers and Sisters, and He wished to save us, but even to save us He would not be unjust. His great heart was full of love, but even to indulge that heart of love He would not suffer His righteous Law to be dishonored, nor His moral government to be impaired. Men sometimes talk of God's punishing sin as if it were a freak with Him. It is a necessity! It is imprinted upon the very existence of moral beings that holiness must bring happiness, and unholiness must bring sorrow—and God will not reverse what He has so properly ordained to be the everlasting order of things! God must be just and He could not, therefore, wink at human guilt and pass it by. What, then, must be done? He, Himself, in the Person of His dear Son—for never forget that God the Father gave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son—He, Himself, in the Person of His dear Son, came into this world, assumed our nature and in that nature became the Representative of His people. And as their Representative He took upon Himself their sins. And being found with their sins imputed to Him, God dealt with our sin as laid upon Him! He found it there and He smote it there—and because of our sin Jesus bled and Jesus died! And now, when we come into a state of peace with God, it is not over the ruins of a broken Law. It is not over the shattered tablets which Moses broke at the foot of the mountain!

We come to the holy God in a holy way! Sinners are forgiven in a righteous way, the unjust are reckoned as just in a just fashion! There is not, in the salvation of a sinner, any keeping back or veiling of the Justice of God. He is just, yet He is the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. I love this glorious Truth of God—it seems to me to be the charm of mercy in Christ that it is righteous mercy. This is the quintessence of delight that, when the saint gets to Heaven, he will be as rightly there as the sinner in Hell will be rightly *there*. There will be as much of the Divine holiness seen in the salvation of the dying thief as in the damnation of that other thief who perished in his sin! So let us, as we come to the Lord's Table,

"give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." We are going to commune with a God who, so that He might commune with us and indulge His love to His chosen, would not break His own Law, or do that which, on the strictest judgment, could be regarded as unjust! I rejoice in that unquestionable fact—and my heart is glad as I remind you of it!

And, next, let us give thanks at the remembrance of *Christ's holiness declared*. It is a happy occupation to look upon the perfect Character of our dear Redeemer. If there could have been found a fault or flaw in Him, He would not have been a suitable Substitute for us. If He had committed a single sin, He could not have taken our sins upon Himself, nor could He have put them away. Think, then, as you sit at this table, what a pure Christ He was! What a perfect Man as well as perfect God, what a spotless Character He possessed! And then, inasmuch as this was absolutely necessary to the completeness of the Atonement which you celebrate at this table, "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." I think I see Him coming in before us in His snow-white garments, girt with the golden girdle, with a face that for purity and brightness looks like the sun when it shines in its strength. And I fall down and admire and adore, not only His mercy and His meekness, and His charity, but the perfect holiness of my Redeemer and Lord! As you come to the table, Beloved, give thanks at the remembrance of the holiness of Him who sits at the head of the feast—the Lord Jesus, Himself, who passes you the cup and says to you, "Drink you all of it." And who breaks the bread and says, "Take, eat. This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me." "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

I think, also, that it will be quite congruous with our present engagement if we think of *God's holiness as the guarantee of our salvation*. This may seem a striking thing to say, but it is assuredly true. Blessed be the righteous God! It is, after all, upon the righteousness of God that we rest our hope! If God can lie, then not one promise of His is to be trusted. If God can do an unrighteous thing, then His Covenant may be flung to the winds! But God is not unrighteous to forget the work of His dear Son and, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love." He who has pledged His word to you, saying, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels," will keep that pledge and you shall be there! He who has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me," will keep His promise and you shall never be ashamed! You, poor sinners, when you first come to Christ, look to God's mercy and trust to it—and you do quite rightly. But after you have been a little while with Christ and begin to know the Father through knowing the Son, you come to "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." You see that, at the back of His mercy, as the very foundation and pillar of His Grace, there stands His righteousness! Beloved, as we come to the Communion Table, we give thanks at the remembrance of a hope that is grounded upon the righteousness of God! And we therefore sing praises to His holy name.

Once more. I think that, at this table, we may give thanks that *the holiness of God is our mark*, the objective for us to aim at, yes, and that to which we shall one day attain. "Be you holy, for I am holy." "Be you per-

fect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." I sometimes ask our young friends, when they come to join the Church, whether they are perfect. And they open their eyes and look at me and say, "Oh, no; far from it!" Then, when I ask, "Would you like to be perfect?" their eyes sparkle with delight, as much as to say, "Why, that is the Heaven we are looking for, to be absolutely free from sin! We would not mind sorrow, sickness, pain, persecution, or anything of that sort, so long as we could but get rid of sin."

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure. And if sin is conquered, I am perfectly happy." This will be the case with all Believers one of these days, but not here. Of all the people whom I have ever met with—who have told me that they were perfect—I can say that I was morally certain they were not! They had only to talk for about five minutes and they proved their own imperfection. But, Beloved, we *shall* be perfect one day. "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He has you now like an unfinished vessel on the potter's wheel—you are in the clay state and the great Potter is putting His finger on you and molding you. You are not half-fashioned yet, but He will never throw you away! He does not begin to make a vessel to honor and then cease His work, but He perfects that which He begins. And, one of these days you and I shall stand together as a part of the perfected work of God of which even He shall say, "It is very good." Therefore, when we come to this Table, though we come sighing over our own imperfections, let us come singing because of the holiness of God—that holiness which we shall yet share!—

"O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God."

The children shall yet bear the image of their Father, the brethren shall yet be conformed to the glories of the First-Born! Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

III. Lastly, the text is very appropriate for the Communion because of THE SUITABILITY OF THE PEOPLE of whom it speaks, for they are the same people who ought to come to this table—"Sing to the Lord, O you *saints* of His."

First, then, those who come to this table should be "*saints*." "Ah," says one, "that is what I called a person this afternoon—'one of your saints.'" I suppose you thought it was an ugly name, did you not? Well, you are perfectly welcome to call me by that name if you like, only I wish that you would prove the title to be true. "There," said one to a Christian man, as he shoved him into the gutter, "take that, John Bunyan!" What did the other man say? Why, he picked up his hat and said, "You may fling me into the gutter again if you call me by that name! I am perfectly satisfied to take the compliment." You call a man a, "saint," and then think you have done him an ill turn? Why do you not call him a nobleman? Why do you not call him a peer of the realm? For many of your noblemen, your peers of the realm are poor stuff compared with the "saints!" I would sooner be a saint than be an emperor, or all the emperors rolled into one! A "saint"—why, it is a glorious title!

"Oh," says one, "I mean Cromwell's saints." Do you? Well, they were not a bad sort of saints, after all, whether you try them by the strength of their arms in the day of battle, or by the strength of their lungs when they sang, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered," and shouted in Jehovah's name in the midst of the battle! Or when they went back to their tents and knelt in prayer and communed with the Most High. But *I* do not mean Cromwell's saints and I am not going to talk more about them! I say that this is what *every* Christian ought to be—a "saint." It means a holy person, one who aims at being holy, one who is set apart for the service and glory of God. These are the people who are to give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness because God has made them holy, too! They are partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, and so they are saints. And they are the people who ought to come to the Table of the Lord.

But notice that they are not only saints, they are "saints *of His*." That is to say, they are *God's saints*—not Rome's saints, but God's saints! They might be Cromwell's saints, but, better than that, they are God's saints! "O you saints of *His*." That is to say, they are saints of His making, for they were great sinners till He made saints of them. And they are saints of His keeping, for they would soon be sinners, again, if He did not keep them! They are saints enlisted in His service, sworn to serve under His banner, to be faithful to Him to death. They are "saints of *His*," that is, they are saints whom He purchased with His precious blood and whom He means to have as His forever because He has bought them with so great a price! They are saints who shall be with Him in that day when He shall appear with all His holy ones. Then, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His." If God has made you holy. If you belong to Christ and so *are* holy, let your heart sing! Fling away your doubts, cast away your fears, forget your sorrows! "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His."

Further, these people who are spoken of in the text, the kind of people who ought to come to the Communion Table, are *God's thankful saints*. They "give thanks at this remembrance of His holiness." The man who has no thanks to give ought not to be at the Table of the Lord, for it is called the Eucharist, which signifies the giving of thanks. It is intended to be a giving of thanks from beginning to end. Jesus took the bread and gave thanks. After the same manner, also, He took the cup and gave thanks. So, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His and give thanks." If we would come aright to the Table of the Lord, we must be thankful saints.

Then, lastly, they who come to the Lord's Table should be *singing saints*. "May not mourning saints come?" Oh, yes! Come and welcome, but learn to sing! "May not weak and feeble saints come?" Oh, yes! But let them not remain weak and feeble. "May not groaning saints come?" Yes, they may come if they like, but groaning is out of place when you have your head on Christ's bosom and have His flesh and His blood to feed upon! It should stop all your groans and moans when you once begin to feast on Him. I wish that more of God's people would take to singing. I have known some few who were truly singing saints. I remember an old gentleman in my very young days. The first thing he did, when he rose in the morning, was to sing a hymn while he was washing and

dressing. When he came downstairs, the family knew by his singing that he was about. When he went into the street, he used to hum some little bit of a ditty and the people laughed, and said that old Father So-and-So was always singing. You could never put the good old man out, for as soon as he finished one hymn, he began another, and if anybody stopped him, so that he could not sing, he only waited till he could begin again and, all the while, he kept going over it silently in his heart.

We have not enough singing saints! The other Sunday morning I noticed that there was a lifeboat crew over at the farther end of the Tabernacle, and one Brother began saying, "Amen!" as soon as ever I commenced to pray. Somebody stopped him and I cannot say that I felt very sorry for my own sake and the congregation, generally, but after the service was over he and his mates said that they enjoyed the preaching, but what a dead lot of people we were! He was a red-hot Methodist, accustomed to cry out, "Glory!" and, "Hallelujah!" He said he could not make us people out. One of our friends said to me, "If I had not said, 'Hallelujah!' the other Sunday morning, I must have burst altogether." I like people to get into that condition and if, sometimes, they should break the silence and cry, "Glory!" why, it is better than that they should burst, at any rate! It is a great mercy that they feel their hearts so full that they are ready to burst. People express their praise and delight spontaneously concerning far less things than the joys of God and the privileges of His people, therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." Now you must finish my sermon for me by standing up and singing—

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:39-65.

In anticipation of the Communion service that is to follow this service, [The Scripture exposition always took place *before the sermon was preached.*—EOD] let us read once more the story of our Lord's agony and arrest, as recorded in the 22nd Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Probably we are all familiar with the narrative of the event which happened on that dreadful night. May the Holy Spirit teach us what He meant!

Verse 39. *And Jesus came out and went, as He was known, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.* The garden of Gethsemane had often been the place of our Lord's private prayer and it was, therefore, well selected as the scene of His fierce struggle with the foe. Where we get strength from God in private, it may often happen that we shall have to endure our greatest conflicts. Singularly enough, it is said that the Jews had a custom of taking the red heifer to the Mount of Olives before it was sacrificed, as if they set forth in that very act, the leading of Christ Jesus into Gethsemane and the bringing Him back again with His raiment all red with His own blood. We might alter the Prophet's words a little and ask, "Who is this that comes from Olivet, with dyed

garments from Gethsemane?" and the Divine Sufferer, Himself, might answer, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

40. *And when He was at the place, He said to them, Pray that you enter not into temptation.* He knew what sore temptation meant and He was about to feel it at its utmost. And He, therefore, exhorted His disciples to pray even as He had formerly taught them in the model prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

41-43. *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done. And there appeared an angel to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him.* This is so plain a proof of Christ's condescension as a Man that it has overwhelmed some persons. They can hardly understand how it could be true. Therefore, I believe this 43rd verse is omitted in some versions of the Scriptures and there have been several learned men who, while they could not disprove the existence of the verse in the most ancient manuscripts, have yet labored hard to cut it out, since they thought it too great a stoop for Christ to take. But, my dear Friends, in this condescension of our Lord we learn how truly He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Doubtless, we receive much strengthening from angels—"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" And why should not Christ, who was in all things made like His brethren, also be strengthened by an angel?

44. *And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* The Greek has the idea of the stretching of the sinews—Christ prayed to the very stretching of His nerves and sinews. As when men wrestle for their lives, so did Christ in prayer strain every power of mind and body that He might prevail. Luke alone describes this dread scene of Christ's agonizing even to blood, but there is no doubt whatever, from this passage, that our Lord Jesus did actually sweat blood—not something *like* blood, but blood itself—and that in great drops and in such quantities that it did not only adhere to His flesh and stain His garments, but there was such an abundance of it that in great drops it fell down to the ground.

45, 46. *And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said to them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.* Our Lord was Himself so smarting under the pain of fierce temptation that He would have His disciples pray even to an agony that they might not be led into it. And oh, if you and I have to pray that we be not led into temptation, how much more should we be instant in supplication when we are in the furnace of temptation! Then, indeed, if we restrain prayer before God, we shall be in an evil case.

47. *And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and He that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him.* It is a remarkable fact that we do not read in Scripture that any other of our Lord's Apostles—not even John—ever kissed the Savior! It seems as if the most impudent familiarity was very near akin to dastardly treachery. The eleven would have thought it a high honor to be al-

lowed even to kiss Christ's *feet,* but Judas, having lost respect for his Master, it was no very great descent for him, first to sell his Lord, and then to betray Him with a kiss. Mark you, Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ is generally betrayed thus. How, for instance, do men usually begin their books when they mean to undermine the Inspiration of Scripture? Why, with a declaration that they wish to promote the truth of Christ! There is the Judas-kiss and the betrayal comes quickly afterwards. How is it that Christ's name is often most grossly slandered among men? Why, by those who make a loud profession of love to Him and then sin foully as the chief of transgressors!

48. *But Jesus said to Him, Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?* Christ might put that question to many of His nominal followers in the present day—"Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

49. *When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said to Him, Lord, shall we strike with the sword?* There is always that tendency, even among Christian people, to get their hands on a sword, but a good man's hand is never more out of place than there! When he has his hands clasped in prayer, or placed upon the promises of God, then it is well. But a Christian with his hand upon his sword is something like an angel putting forth his hand to iniquity.

50-53. *And one of them smote the servant of the High Priest, and cut of his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer you thus far. And He touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, and captains of the Temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Have you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour and the power of darkness.* "This is the time when I am given up, on the one hand to the temptations of Satan—the power of darkness—and, on the other hand, to you. 'This is your hour.'" And, as beasts that prowl in the darkness are generally the most ravenous and fierce, so were these chief priests and captains and elders most determined in seeking the blood of Christ! Paul afterwards wrote that none of the princes of this world knew the hidden Wisdom of God, "for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." It was the darkness of their minds that led them thus to hunt the only Savior of sinners to His death. Satan himself would scarcely have had a hand in crucifying Christ had he understood that by that very Crucifixion, Christ would break the old serpent's head forever!

54. *Then they took Him and led Him, and brought Him to the High Priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.* For which he is not to be altogether blamed. I do not find that any other disciple followed Christ so near as Peter did. John was, probably, even farther off at first. Yet, dear Friends, you and I may rest assured that if we follow Christ afar off, it will not be long before we deny Him! Those disciples who are ashamed of their Master, who never come out and openly confess their faith in Him, have the seeds of treachery already sown within them. O Brothers and Sisters, be bold and cleave close to Christ, for this is the way to walk securely!

55. *And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.* "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Get up, Peter, and run away! What business have you sitting there? Better be in the cold, far off from evil company, than in the warm in the midst of sinners.

56, 57. *But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not!* See how the most courageous are often cast down by the very slightest means? The tongue of a poor feeble woman is too much for this valiant Peter who said that he *never* would deny his Master, even though he should die with Him.

58-60. *And after a little while another saw him, and said, You are also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say.* Matthew and Mark tell us that to prove this statement, and to make it quite clear that he was not a follower of Christ, he began to curse and to swear, as if the best evidence that he was not a Christian would be afforded by his cursing and swearing.

60, 61. *And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.* How that look must have pierced Peter through and through!

61-64. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the cock crows, you shall deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck You?* Upon this passage a good man well observes that one of these days Christ will answer this taunt. With His unerring finger, the Judge of All shall point them out and say to each one, "You are the man." There are many of you, perhaps, who are committing sin in private and you think it is not known. You are almost ready to ask the question of Him whom you look upon as a blindfolded God, "Who is it that struck You?" Ah, but He sees you all the while! He reads the secret thoughts of your hearts and the day will come when He will let you know that *nothing* has escaped His all-seeing eyes!

65. *And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him.* The Lord bless to us all the reading of this sad, sad story! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—713, 938, 287.

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

THE DANGER OF CARNAL SECURITY
NO. 2490

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10, 1886.

"Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were there, how they dwelt carelessly, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything; and they were far from the Sidonians, and had no business with any man... And they took the things which Micah had made, and the price At which he had, and came to Laish, to a people that were quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burned the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no business with any man."
Judges 18:7, 27, 28.

I HAVE for this evening's discourse what some of you may consider to be rather an amazing text. Let me, therefore, begin by briefly stating the circumstances surrounding it.

The tribe of Dan found its portion to be rather too small, so the people held a council to decide what was to be done. They resolved to send a small body of men to spy out the land—these spies came, in due time, to a place called Laish, which they found to be inhabited by certain people who dwelt there carelessly, in supposed security, "after the manner of the Sidonians." They were attacked without any notice and the tribe of Dan took their territory and added it to their own. I do not, in the least degree, commend the action of these people. What I have to do with the narrative is to use it for the purpose of drawing from it lessons suited to the present time.

I suppose that these people, who were living at Laish, were originally a colony of Sidonians, and they had settled in a very fat, fertile valley—according to the tenth verse, a place where there was no lack of anything. They did not care to trade with others, they were not at all an enterprising or busy people. Finding every luxury growing out of their own soil, they had no care to do business with any other men whatever. They kept no guard or watch, for, although they knew that, in common with all the other inhabitants of the land of Canaan, they had been doomed to fall by the sword of Israel, yet the Israelites had been very slow in conquering the country. Many years had passed since Joshua had died. Many judges had come and gone and they had never been troubled.

Therefore they rested in perfect ease, neither drilling themselves, nor exercising any warlike arts, but feeling altogether secure, living luxuriously in a fools' paradise. It was so, for, all of a sudden, these Danites, giving them no notice whatever, fell upon them, cut them up, root and branch, burned their city and took the land for themselves.

I am not going into the moral of this business—how far Dan is to be blamed. I am simply going to use this incident as the picture of a very common condition which is to be found among the sons of men—which condition is a very dangerous and false one, and will end, unless the Grace of God prevents it, in the destruction of those who are thus carnally secure.

I. First, let us notice THE CONDITION OF CARNAL SECURITY INTO WHICH CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES FALL.

If they fall into such a condition as that, they may rest assured that it is one of great danger. Let me describe it to you. Here is a man who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. In times long gone by he struggled hard to get his feet upon the Rock of Ages and, at last, he obtained a firm footing and there he stood in blessed security. For some time, perhaps even for *years*, he has been free from all doubts and fears—and also *free from all internal struggles and conflicts*. He almost thinks that the devil is dead, or, if not, that the devil in *him* is dead, that sin has become so broken and bruised in *his* nature that it will never rise again, or cause him trouble! He rejoices and continues to rejoice, but it may be that in the course of time the dry rot of self-satisfaction will begin to show itself. The man would not say, with the Pharisee, that he thanks God he is not as other men, but there is something of that sort of feeling within his heart. He entered into full assurance of faith at the first, but that full assurance has begun to rust into *confidence in self*. And now, no longer emptied from vessel to vessel, his sin remains in him. No longer tossed upon the waves, he makes little or no progress towards the heavenly haven—his ship's keel upon the ocean is still amidst a calm, but the fear is that the calm will grow into stagnation—and the stagnation into corruption. God save the man to whom a calm, itself, becomes more dangerous than a tempest! I think you must know some people of that kind. Perhaps if some of you look in the mirror, you may see at least one person of that sort! The Sidonians mentioned in our text had no dread of warfare, or the sound of the trumpet, or the crash of arms—and self-confident professors are in much the same condition.

You noticed, also, about these Sidonians that they had "no magistrate in the land." I think I have known some persons who may have possessed a conscience, but if so, it had gone to sleep. I have great fear for *religious men with sleepy consciences* and it is really amazing what mischief may be done by men who seem to be heartily religious, yet whose consciences have gone soundly asleep. There are some ungodly men who would tremble to do what some professing Christians do without any qualms of conscience! God save you, dear Friends, from such a state of heart as that! We ought to long for a holy sensitiveness of conscience. We

should wish to have it tender as the apple of the eye, so that the very least touch of sin should startle and amaze us! We are all too apt to grow a skin over our conscience and, after a time, it gets to be callous and we need to have it wounded and kept open like a fresh raw wound, so that the least speck of sin may cause it intense anguish! We are never what we ought to be except we are in that condition! Yet I have known some professors who have been so long at ease in Zion that the moss has grown over their conscience and you can scarcely get at it so as to awaken it to a sense of sin!

These Sidonians, next, had *no care at all about other people*. We are told *twice* that they "had no business with any man." Are there any people who are called Christians who are of that sort, and have no concern, or very little concern, about the souls of others? They say that they care about the heathen, for they have subscribed five shillings towards sending a missionary to lay down his life on a foreign shore! They care about the people who are dying at home, for they spoke to someone about the Sunday school a little while ago, and they said a kind word for the City Mission! They have never done anything by way of *teaching* children, or *visiting* the poor and needy—you could not expect it of them, of course. They are such men of business—they have so many matters to attend to that you could put into a small thimble anything they do for the cause of God. They take little or nothing for the Lord out of the full river of their life's force, so far as the good of their fellows is concerned. They have "no business with any man."

Years ago they were very active workers—at least, they tell us so. In some dim remote past, almost forgotten, they did try to take up Christ's Cross and to bear His yoke, but now they are gentlemen at large, supernumeraries, who have entered upon a period of dignified rest—Sidonians, having no business with any man! Some of these people never join a church, for they do not care about its responsibilities. They are going to Heaven, so they say, yet they are trying to get there without walking in the King's Highway, but sneaking behind the hedges and taking rest whenever they can. They will not enter the Palace Beautiful, nor join the caravans of pilgrims that march together, with their Great-Hearts leading them and fighting giants on the road. We still have this sort of Christians about. I call them Christians, but God alone knows whether they are His or not.

These people also live, like the Sidonians did, *without any fear of invasion*. It is not at all likely that they will ever fall into gross sin, at least so they say. Young people, of course, have strong passions and *they* may fall into sin, but these old, experienced people are not likely to be carried away by temptation. Some people are very foolish and they may be caught by the subtlety of the old serpent, but these good old professors are wonderfully wise. Indeed, it is quite a wonder that one small head can carry all they know! They are so deeply experienced that if they were to die, half the experience in the church would die out with them! So excellent are they that, with regard to their yielding to temptation and fal-

ling into sin, it is quite impossible! Of course, the young folk had better pledge themselves to total abstinence because drink would be a temptation to *them,* but these good people can drink just a sufficient quantity and no more, they have such control of themselves! Of course, young men and women had better keep away from doubtful places of amusement, but these old people are so supremely good that if they were living in the devil's camp, their hearts would still be in Heaven! They can be trusted anywhere!

Perhaps you enquire, "Does anybody seriously believe this what you have been saying?" Anybody seriously believe it? Why, yes, some of you do, only you do not put it into words and if I were to point you out and say that you believed it, you would flatly contradict me. But you do, all the same. There are many professing Christians who live as if they were beyond gun-shot of the enemy and were quite safe and secure. They say, spiritually, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years—eat, drink and be merry." And all the while they are in imminent danger of falling into the very worst forms of sin, proving apostates, after all, showing the rottenness of their profession, letting all see that their religion is nothing better than a painted disguise to go to Hell in—but not a work of God in the soul by which that soul is really and truly saved. A friend told me that the other night, as she sat in this Tabernacle, there spoke with her a person who is a regular frequenter of this House of Prayer and who said that she was without sin, that she did not know that anything preached here at all suited her—and that she believed I was well aware that she did not require any admonitions or exhortations.

She was glad to hear me earnest about sinners, but *she* was not a sinner—she had not been a sinner for a long time and any exhortations that were directed to sleepy saints, she felt were very proper, but they did not belong to her. In fact, she only came because it was a proper thing to come, but she did not expect to get anything for herself out of the services—she had advanced far beyond that point. Well, I do not know where you are, my good Sister, but you are the very person to whom I am now speaking! You superlatively good people who think you do not need any warning are the exact persons I am most anxious to warn. Remember Cowper's lines—

"He has no hope who never felt a fear.
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."

He that is, as men say, so "cock sure," may find himself lost after all. He may be but a dotard and a dreamer, notwithstanding all his confidence. I would rather go to Heaven doubting all the way than be lost through self-confidence. I would rather cry out in the bitterness of my spirit, "Am I sincere or not?" and cry it out every day, than write myself down among the blessed and, at last, wake up and find myself in Hell!

There is a holy fear which must not be banished from the Church of God. There is a sacred anxiety which puts us to the question and examines us whether we are in the faith—and it is not to be laughed at as

some would do. It is all very fine to say, "Believe that you are right, and you are right," but if you believe that you are right and you are, all the while, *wrong*, you put yourself beyond the probability of ever getting right! He who believes himself to be saved when he is not is likely to shut the door of salvation in his own face and to perish self-excluded. God save us from that fatal folly! I would blow the trumpet of warning even in Zion! I would sound an alarm in God's holy mountain! May you and I never get beyond spiritual conflicts, beyond striving against our corruptions, beyond hating the garment spotted by the flesh! May we never get beyond a holy filial fear and a grave anxiety that in all that we do we may be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God! If not, we may get to be like these Sidonians dwelling carelessly in their city of Laish—and one of these days destruction may enter our gates when we little expect it.

II. Now I change the theme to speak of THIS CONDITION OF CARNAL SECURITY IN THE UNSAVED and to address those who know that they are *not converted*, and who make no profession of religion whatever. There are some of these who live very carelessly and who are very difficult to awaken to a true sense of their peril.

Let me describe this condition as it is found among many unsaved persons. Our text tells us that when the spies came to Laish, they "saw the people that were therein, how *they dwelt carelessly*." That is the way with the carnally secure—they are careless. As long as they can enjoy the present, they are quite indifferent to all thoughts of the future. Many of you see no further than your hand can reach. Multitudes of men restrict their vision to that which might be seen by an ox or a sheep. If there is enough grass in the pasture, the ox is satisfied. Indeed, he does not look over the whole pasture, for if there is but grass near his nose, it is enough for him. And, oh, the multitudes of London, and of England, and in the world at large, whose only questions are, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?" They live as if they would never die, or as if, when they died, they would die like dogs and that would be the end of them. This spirit breeds carelessness about their lives, about their thoughts, about prayer, about all holy things. They ask, "What is all that to us? It may do very well for some people to be religious, but we have to work hard from morning to night and we cannot think about these things at all." They would reduce themselves, if they could, to the level of swine! They are as careless as the beasts that perish. Perhaps, my dear Hearer, that word, "careless," describes you.

And, connected with this carelessness, there is, next, *a great quietness from all trial*. It is not so with many of you, for you are sorely vexed with troubles, sickness, poverty, or bereavement. You seem to be *always* afflicted and you may always thank God if you are! It is evident that He has not given you up and left you to sleep yourselves to destruction. But there are certain persons who appear to have no troubles. Their path is wonderfully smooth, they have all that heart can wish, they touch nothing without prospering. They are contented and well they may be, for it seems as if Providence had determined to make them rich! And yet what

do I see before me? A bull locked in the stall! Would I rejoice to be that bull? No, for I know why it is thus fed—it is fattened for the *slaughter* and already I see the pole-axe lifted in the air and about to descend upon the poor beast! And many a man who is indulged with everything that he can desire is nothing better than a fattened bull doomed to die! Yet many care not about that—they are quite satisfied if they can enjoy themselves today—as for tomorrow, it must take thought for the things of itself.

Meanwhile, these same people are *quite secure as to the future*. A funeral perhaps startles them for a moment. The passing bell has a strange tone to their ears, but, for the most part, they put away all thoughts of death. They are young, or they are robust—*they* will not soon die and, therefore, should they even think of it? And, as for that Great White Throne, and the Judgment Seat, and the assembled worlds, and the rocking earth, and the blazing Heaven—well, it is only *preachers* who talk about those things! They put their fingers in their ears and will not listen to our warnings—and go their way to their farms and to their merchandise—and let the future take care of itself. This is the horrible condition of multitudes of mankind that, with the best possible reasons for being concerned about the future, they resolve that they will not wake up to it, but that, like these men of Laish, they will dwell "quiet and secure."

The trumpet is sounding, the adversaries are marching from Dan, they have already encamped on the way! Men of Laish, why do you gird yourselves for the dance and for the feast—the sword of the enemy will soon be at your throats? And, O you men of London, you men of this world, how can you make mirth and sport while the day of your doom hastens on and Death, on the pale horse, rides so fast towards you and judgment follows at his heels? Yet I may say what I will, but, with the most of men, I shall but waste my breath, for they dwell so carelessly, and wrap themselves up in their ease!

These people of Laish, it seems, were also *free from all restraint*. "There was no magistrate in the land." It is a perilous thing for any of us to know no restraint—especially for that young man who, in a few days, is coming into possession of a large fortune and will then have his full swing. Oh, if I could get hold of his hand, I would wet it with my tears while I urged him not to court ruin with his fingers jeweled with the mercies of God! To turn the blessings of Providence into stones to throw at Him who gave them to us is base ingratitude, indeed! I pray that the young man, instead of acting so, may begin a new and better life and so use his substance for the Glory of God. We are all impatient of control, but nothing can be worse for some men than to have no voice to check, no language to upbraid, no tender wife or gentle friend who will administer a kind rebuke. But there *are* such, and there may be such *here* who are all the more confident and stolid because there is no conscience yet awake within them—and nobody to serve as a conscience for them. "There was no magistrate in the land."

And, once more, these people at Laish were *self-contained*. "They had no business with any man." There are some persons who are all the more

hard to get at because they do not want to be interfered with. If anybody were to speak to such a man about his soul, tonight, he would say, "Don't you bother about me! Leave me alone, I can take care of myself." But he who takes care of himself generally has a fool for a keeper! All of us need some help from others and those of us who receive most help thank God for all that we get.

Yet once more, according to verse 10, these people at Laish had *"no need of anything."* They had all that heart could wish. I daresay that while I have been describing them, some of you have half envied them. Of course you do if you are of the same nature as they were! But the day shall come when some of us will bless God for poverty and for sickness because we shall get to Heaven by such help—while others will have to curse themselves because they turned their health, their vigor and their wealth into occasions and opportunities for sin! If we could, we would escape all trial, but we would be very unwise to do so. If, by falling down upon my knees, now, I could prevail with God so that there should be no poverty to the drunk, I dare not pray the prayer! Or that there should be no disease to the unclean man, I dare not pray the prayer! Or that there should be no punishment to the thief, I dare not pray it! It is, after all, best for society that sin should be followed by chastisement, and it is best for us all that we should be drawn to God, or *driven* to Him, by the troubles and trials of this mortal life, rather than that we should now be set in the slippery places of ease and, by-and-by, be cast down to destruction! Oh, that I could say a word that would make you easy-going men, who have all you can desire, begin to tremble amidst your plenty—lest eternal ruin should follow the greatness of God's bounty!

III. So now, thirdly, I want to speak briefly upon THE EVILS OF THIS CONDITION OF CARNAL CONFIDENCE in which an ungodly man is perfectly at his ease in a dying world.

The first result of it is that *warnings are unheeded*. Preach, Mr. Preacher, and preach your very heart out, but this man does not care a bit about it all, for he is perfectly at ease and happy—nothing ever stings him into anxiety! He never wakes at night to cry to God for mercy. He never dreams of judgment, not he! His companions sing that "he's a jolly good fellow" and he thoroughly enjoys himself. Just so. Yet he has no God, no Christ, no hope! He trifles with eternal things and makes this world his all. Alas, all our most solemn warnings are lost upon him!

What is worse, *all the mercies of God are lost on him*. What is the use of bidding him wash in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness? He does not feel that he is foul. Why present him with garments of righteousness? He does not know anything about his iniquity. Why talk to him of a Physician? He feels no sickness. Why point him to a Savior? He does not believe that he is lost! Oh, how I wish that the pangs of contrition would strike through ungodly men and women in this house! Dear Master, fit Your sharp arrows to Your bow and wound them now! Fill this house with stricken souls that will cry mightily for You! Then shall they

have You! Then shall they rejoice in You! But men miss these choice mercies of God because they are self-contented and carnally at ease.

The further result is that, as year follows after year, *the heart grows still harder*. In the young man there once was a little feeling, but now in the gray head there is none. You might have impressed him when he was a boy at his mother's knee, but you cannot influence him now. He does not believe anything you say, for he is case-hardened—the devil has fitted on him a coat of mail which seems to even turn the edge of the Sword of the Spirit. Ah, miserable man!

And in this man, worse still, *great sin is being prepared*. He may not yet have sinned grossly against the laws of his country or of society, but where there is such fuel as this hard heart and stolid will, the devil will not be slow to bring the flame! I look on some self-confident men and read their terrible future in their present assurance. And I would say to each one, as to another Hazael, "I know what you will do. You have been moral and excellent, but the day will come when, having cast off all fear of God, you will do what it would horrify you to hear of now." The man asks, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" No, you are not a dog, but if you were, it would be better for you than to be what you are! No man knows how much of devil there is asleep in him—and no man may dream that he is secure from the worst of evils unless he comes to Jesus, gets a new heart and puts himself into the keeping of the One who is better and stronger than himself. Then he will be safe, but short of that all his fancied security is ruinous to the last degree!

I do not know all to whom I am speaking, but I am convinced that I am preaching directly to some of you. Whether you are in the top gallery, or downstairs, or close around the platform, I do not know, but the Lord, the Searcher of all hearts, knows for whom this message is intended. Let us, each one, take it so far as it bears upon our case. Wake, you sleepers, wake! Why sleep? Sin besets you all around. If you have not fled to Christ for salvation. If you have not received a new heart and a right spirit, give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till these things are set right by the power of the Holy Spirit—and you are saved from the wrath to come!

IV. Now, finally, I have to notice THE GREAT DANGER OF THOSE WHO ARE CARNALLY SECURE.

Notice the horror of their doom. These poor careless Sidonians, enjoying themselves, setting no watch, bearing no shield, wielding no sword, rested in fancied security, till, all of a sudden, the swords of their adversaries cut them in pieces and they were destroyed! What I dread most about some men is *the change which will come upon them from their present state of ease.* "Oh, it is all right, Sir!" says one. "It is all right. I feel perfectly happy." An unsaved man may be in the very article of death and yet be quite at ease because his conscience has been so heavily drugged that it does not awake even in his death moments. But it will awake, it will awake! There is no opium that can send your conscience into an eternal slumber, else you might venture to die with your sins un-

cleansed. But it will awake, and oh, the awful change from the fools' paradise to the fools' perdition, from playing with trifles to find that there are no trifles, but that everything is real, earnest, serious in that dread world into which your soul will plunge when God says to you, "Return," and your spirit shall return to God who gave it! I dread the change for you who are now carnally at ease.

And, further, when I think of the doom which will ultimately come upon careless souls, I dread *that sense of self-deceiving which comes upon men*. If they went to Hell merely by virtue of a Divine decree, it would not be such a Hell to them. But to go there by their own folly—this is a fire that can never be quenched! This is a worm that never dies! Such a man will have to say, "I brought myself here. I was warned. That preacher in the Tabernacle spoke to me on that October night as best he could—in rough words, but real earnest—and he bade me awake and escape from the wrath to come, but I said, 'Leave me alone!' Like the sluggard, I turned over to the other side and said, 'A little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands,' and now I am in Hell! I shut myself in here! Those iron bolts I fastened by my own folly! These fires I kindled and the terrible truth burns in my conscience that I, myself, supplied the fuel for this flame." O Sirs, I do pray you, commit not everlasting suicide by resting at ease and peace when there is no rest and no peace, for, "there is no peace, says the Lord, to the wicked."

There is a short, sad sentence in the 28th verse—"*There was no deliverer*." When the Danites were at the gates of Laish, "there was no deliverer." Thank God there is a Deliverer, now! There is a Savior for sinners! Come, guilty souls, and trust yourselves with Jesus! Free, full and immediate pardon is proclaimed to all who trust Him. Submit to His dear will. Look to His blessed wounds and live! But if your ears refuse the language of His Grace. If you despise the invitations of His mercy, there will come a time when there shall be no deliverer, *no deliverer*, NO DELIVERER in Heaven, or earth or Hell—no deliverer—nothing but the sword and the fire, the just and righteous wrath of God which you have, yourselves, obstinately incurred.

Then there came back upon these people of Laish, in their death agony, the fact that they had no business with any man and, therefore, *nobody pitied them*. Nobody came to their rescue! They had no business with any, so none had any business with them—and they died, "unwept, unhonored, and unsung"—only remembered by preachers who, like myself, try to turn their doom into a warning and a lesson for others! You self-contained people who have no business with anybody and do not want anybody to interfere with you. You who do not wish to be warned and would resent anyone's touching you on the shoulder and asking you if you are saved—thus shall it be with you in the evil day—no man shall have any business with you! Shame and everlasting contempt will be the portion of that man who boasted that he could take care of himself, but who found, at last, that he had no deliverer and no man to care for his soul! My dear Hearers, may God save you, every one of you! Could I look

you in the face and wish anything else for any one of you but that you might find eternal salvation in Jesus Christ? No, I could not have any other desire than that! Do you not also wish it for yourselves? Now, a wish is half a prayer—make it a whole one! Breathe this brief prayer to God—"Lord, save me."

Then listen to this Word of Grace which has the message of salvation in it—"Look and live." Jesus died upon the Cross that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. He is lifted up before you, now, that you who have been bitten by the fiery serpent of sin may look to Him, as Israel in the wilderness looked to the brazen serpent—and in that looking, you may be healed. As I shall meet you in that Day of Days for which all other days were made. As I shall make one of the vast throng that will be gathered before the Judgment Seat of Christ, I pray you, bear witness to me, in that day, that I have spoken honestly and faithfully and fearlessly—certainly in no smooth and flattering terms—to every one of you! And if you perish I shall be clear of your blood in that great day. If you will not have Christ and will be damned, you must. But it shall not be without my crying to you, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" "Turn you, turn you," says the Lord God, Himself! Turn them, O Lord, by Your Grace, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18; 5.

1 Thessalonians 4:13. *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.* You cannot help sorrowing, for you miss your dear ones so much. But you do not sorrow like the heathen who believe their departed friends to be extinct and annihilated. You have a glorious hope concerning those who have fallen asleep in Christ—you believe that they still live and that, by-and-by, their bodies will rise again!

14. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, they, also, which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.* There is such a union between Christ and His people that they never can be divided from Him. In life they live in Him, in death they seep in Him. And when He comes again, He will bring them with Him. Christ cannot be without His people. A head without a body would be a ghastly thing—and Christ without His people would be incomplete and imperfect.

15. *For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.* We shall have no preference over the saints who are sleeping in Jesus. We shall not go before them, we shall be on a blessed equality with them.

16, 17. *For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we always be with the Lord.* Whatever ideas we have concerning the

details of Christ's coming, this summing up of the whole matter is unutterably precious to us—"so shall we always be with the Lord." There is no separating Christ and His people! If you are one with Him, He will not be in Heaven and leave you behind. Nor will He be glorified in the Presence of His Father without making you to be partakers of the Glory. What joy there is for us in this blessed Truth of God!

18. *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2. *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.* That is, most unexpectedly to an ungodly world. Even they who are watching for Christ's coming may be, to some extent, surprised at His appearing, as the most watchful person may be when the thief, at last, comes. But we shall not be taken altogether unawares. We shall be, at least in a measure, prepared for the coming of the Lord. But as for the world at large, it will be an awful and surprising visitation—

3. *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* Let no ungodly man dream that he will escape! Apart from vital union to Christ, there will be no escaping for any of us in that tremendous day of the Lord.

4. *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.* You who truly know the Lord. You who are saved through His First Coming and are expecting His Second Coming—

5, 6. *You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others.*—Night is the time for sleep and we sleep best in the darkness, but if we have come into the daylight, if the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon us, let us be wakeful, let us be watchful. When the sun is shining, it is not right that men should sleep. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others."—

6, 7. *But let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night.* Even in Paul's day, drunkenness was a thing that seemed more at home in darkness than in the light. As for us, Brothers and Sisters, let us never be carried away by excess—either drunkenness of body or inebriation of mind—for there is a drunkenness which abjures the cup and yet is as gross an intoxication as the other is. We may be drunk with pride, or drunk with ambition, or drunk with wrath, or drunk with worldliness, but we are to avoid all these evils because we are not, now, in the night, when these drunken fits might be in some sort of harmony with the surrounding darkness.

8-10. *But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.* This seems to be a theme which the Apostle constantly brings up, as though he could not help it—that we are to live together

with Christ. There lies your safety, Brothers and Sisters—"together with Him." If you could get away from Him, you would go down to destruction! But "together with Him" is the path of life, safety and perfection.

11-13. T*herefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.* So that these Apostolic Churches had a ministry set over them in the Lord and they were commanded to know these laborers for the Master, to recognize them as appointed by God to their ministerial position, "and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

14-26. *Now, we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil to any man, but always follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.* That was the Oriental manner of greeting and it means to us, "Greet all the brethren with a hearty shake of the hand." Such tokens of fellowship ought never to be forgotten among the followers of Christ.

27, 28. *I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read to all the holy brethren. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—139 (SONG I), 640, 656, 538.

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

SHAME LEADING TO SALVATION
NO. 2491

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 31, 1886.

"Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Your name, O LORD!" Psalm 83:16.

THIS is a very terrible Psalm. It contains some prayers against the enemies of God and of His people that crash with the thunder of indignation. You know that we are bid to love our enemies, but we are never commanded to love *God's* enemies. We may not hate any men as men, but as they are opposed to God, to truth, to righteousness, to purity, we may and we must, if we are, ourselves, right-minded, feel a burning indignation against them! Did you ever read the story of "the middle passage" in the days of the African slave trade, when the Negroes died by hundreds, or were flung into the sea to lighten the ship? Did you ever read of those horrors without praying, "O God, let the thunderbolts of Your wrath fall on the men who can perpetrate such enormities"? When you heard the story of the Bulgarian atrocities, did you not feel that you must, as it were, pluck God's sleeve and say to Him, "Why does Your justice linger? Let the monsters of iniquity be dealt with by You, O Lord, as they deserve to be"?

Such is the spirit of this Psalm. But I like best this particular verse in it because while it breathes righteous indignation against the wicked, it has mixed with it the tender spirit of love. "Fill their faces with shame," prays the Psalmist, "but overrule Your severity for their everlasting good, 'that they may seek Your name, O Lord.'" The worst fate that I wish to any Hearer of mine who is without God and without hope in the world, is that this prayer may be prayed by honest and loving hearts for him and for others like he—"Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Your name, O Lord."

I. To begin with, let me remind you that UNGODLY MEN HAVE GOOD CAUSE TO BE ASHAMED.

Let us talk a little, first, of *their wrong to their Maker*. If I might take each one of you by the hand, I should say to you, "Friend, you believe in the existence of God, your Maker, do you not? Well, then, have you treated Him rightly? If you have lived in the world 20 years, or perhaps even 40 or 50 years, and yet you have never served Him, do you think that is quite just to Him? If He made you and has fed you and kept you in being all these years, has He not a right to expect some service from you? I might go further and ask, has He not a right to expect your love?

Does He ask more than He should ask when He says, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might'? Yet you have lived these many years and scarcely *thought* of Him! Certainly you have not spoken to Him, you have never confessed your faults to Him, or sought His forgiveness. To all intents and purposes, you have lived as if there were no God at all! Yet, in your earthly affairs you are a very honest man, and you pay everybody else his due—why do you, then, rob your God of what is justly His? There is not a man in the world who could say truly of you that you had dealt dishonorably with him. You pride yourself upon your uprightness and integrity! But must God, alone, then, be made to suffer through your injustice? Out of all beings, must He, alone, who made all other beings, be the only one to be neglected? He is first of all—do you put Him last? He is best of all—do you treat Him worst? If so, I think that such conduct as this is a thing to be ashamed of and I pray that you may be heartily ashamed of it."

Let me quit that line of thought and remind you, next, that there are many ungodly men, and I suppose some here present, who ought to be ashamed because they are acting *in opposition to light and knowledge, contrary to their conscience and against their better judgments*. There are many unconverted men who can never look back upon any day of their lives without having to accuse themselves of wrong. And although they are not Christians, they would scarcely attempt to justify their position. When they act wrongly, there is a voice within them which tells them that they are doing wrong. They are not blind—they could see if they chose to see. They are not deaf, except that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. It is a horrible thing for a man to be always holding down his conscience, like a policeman holding down a mad dog. It is a terrible thing for a man to have to be at war with himself in order to destroy himself—his better self resisting and struggling, as it were, after salvation—but his worse self thrusting back the higher part of his being, sliding his conscience and drowning the cries of any approach to bitterness that may be within him. God forbid that men should act thus and sin against light and knowledge! I venture very quietly, but very solemnly, to tell any who are doing so that they ought to be ashamed of such conduct. They ought to blush at the very thought of acting thus against such light as they have and against the convictions of their own conscience.

There are also some of my Hearers—I speak very positively upon this point—who ought to be ashamed because of *their postponements of what they know to be right*. They have, again and again, put off the observance of duties which they know and admit to be incumbent upon them. "I ought to repent of sin," says one. And then he adds, "and I will, one of these days." "I ought to be a believer in Christ"—he admits that—"and I shall be, I hope, before I die." Oh, how fairly you talk, Mr. Procrastinator! You know what ought to be done at once, but you leave it all for the future. Do you not know that every time a man neglects a duty, he commits a sin? That which you admit is your duty, causes you, every moment it is delayed, to commit sin by the delay! And by delay, obedience

becomes more difficult and you, yourself, become continually more likely to commit yet greater sin! I think that a man who says, "I ought to believe in Christ, I ought to repent of sin, I ought to love God," and yet says, "Well, I will do so at a more convenient season," ought to be ashamed of himself for talking and acting in such a wicked fashion! I pray God that he may be.

I shall come more pointedly home to some when I say that they ought to be ashamed because of *their violation of vows which they have made*. You were very ill, a little while ago, and you said, "O God, if You will but spare my life, and restore me to health and strength, I will rise from this bed to be a better man!" God did raise you up, but you are not a better man. You were seriously injured in an accident and likely to die—and in your distress you prayed, "O God, if You will prolong my unworthy life, I will turn over a new leaf. I will be a very different man in the future!" Well, you *are* a different man, for you are worse than you used to be before the accident! That is all the change that has been worked in you. God keeps a register of the vows that are so lightly broken here below, but so well remembered up in Heaven, and the day will come when they shall be brought out to the condemnation of those who made them and then failed to keep them! If you are determined to be a liar, lie not to God! If you are resolved to make promises, only to break them, at least trifle not with Him in whose hands your life is, and whose are all your ways. He who must play the fool, had better do it with some fellow fool, and not parade his folly before "Him that rides upon the heavens by His name JAH." Think, then, dear Friends, of vows violated and blush because of them!

Moreover, it seems to me—and I shall leave it to your judgment to consider and approve what I say—that every man ought to be ashamed of not loving the Lord Jesus Christ and *not trusting such a Savior as the Lord Jesus Christ is*. *God* in human flesh, bleeding, dying, bearing the penalty of human sin and then presenting Himself freely as our Sacrifice and saying that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life! Do you push Him away from you? Will you trample on His blood and count it an unholy thing? Will you despise His Cross? It sometimes seems to me that blasphemy and adultery and murder—tremendous evils though these are—scarcely reach the height of guilt that comes through *refusing the great love of Christ*—thrusting Him aside whom God took from His bosom and gave up to die that men might live through Him! If you must spite anybody, spite anybody but the Christ of God! If you mean to refuse a friend, refuse any friend but the bleeding Savior who spared not His very life, but poured out the floods from His heart that He might save the guilty!

So, you see, dear Friends, that he who loves not Christ, and trusts not Christ, has good cause to be ashamed.

I will not say any more upon this first point, except just one thing and that is, *a man ought to be ashamed who will not even think of these things*. There are great numbers of our fellow citizens in London and our fellow creatures all the world over who have resolved not to *think* about

religion at all. There stands the House of God, but on that same street there is hardly one person who ever enters it. There is a Bible in almost every house, but many, nowadays, will not read it, or try to understand it. I should have thought that common and idle curiosity alone might have made men anxious to understand the Christian religion, the way of salvation by a crucified Savior. I should have fancied that they would have strayed in to see what our worship was like. If it had been the worship of Mumbo Jumbo, they would have wanted to see *that*, but when it is the worship of the Lord God Almighty and of His Son, Jesus Christ, the multitudes seem to be utterly indifferent to it! From the Cross I hear my dying Master cry, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like My sorrow." Even the voice of His gaping wounds and the voice of His bloody sweat, and the voice of His broken heart seem to fall upon hearts that will not listen and upon ears that are as deaf as stones!

Many who come to hear the Gospel go their way to their farms and to their merchandise, but they care nothing for Him who is worth more than all beside. O Sirs, in that day when this solid earth shall rock and reel, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, when the stars shall fall like the leaves of autumn and when there shall sail into the sky, conspicuous to the gaze of all, the Great White Throne, and on it shall sit the despised Redeemer, you will repent, then, and regret when it is too late that you gave Him none of your thoughts, but put the affairs of religion wholly on the side! Investigate this matter, I charge you! By what your Immortal souls are worth, by an eternal Heaven and an endless Hell—and there are both of these, despite what some say—I charge you, as I shall meet you at the Judgment Seat, and would be clear of your blood—give earnest attention to the things that make for your peace and consider the claims of God and of His Christ! And seek to find the way of salvation by faith in Jesus.

Thus, surely, I have said enough upon this first point—ungodly men have good cause to be ashamed.

II. Now, secondly, concerning these ungodly people, let me show you that SHAME IS A VERY DESIRABLE THING IF IT DRIVES THEM TO GOD. Hence the prayer, "Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord."

I have known shame to drive men to God in various ways. Sometimes shame attends *the breaking up of self-righteousness*. I knew a young fellow who had been a very upright moral man all his days. He seemed to think that he should go to Heaven by his good works, but he had no notion of a Savior and no regard for the things of Christ. One day, being in the workshop, he upset an oil can and his boss, who was rather a bad-tempered man, enquired sharply who had wasted the oil. And this man, who had always, till then, been truthful, on this occasion told a lie and said that he did not upset the can. Nobody found him out, mark you—he was so highly respected that his employer fully believed that he had not done it—but he went down greatly in his own esteem. He said to me, "Sir, my righteousness went all to pieces in a moment. I knew that I had told a

lie. I felt disgusted with myself and when I got out of the shop, for the first time in my life, I cried to God for mercy, for I saw myself to be a sinner." Now I do not wish any of you to commit further sin in order that you may realize your true condition in God's sight! You have done already enough evil, without doing any more, but I would like some one of these sins to come so sharply home to you that it would make you feel ashamed and give up all pretence of self-righteousness—and come by faith to Christ and take His righteousness to be your perfect covering before God.

I have known this shame to operate in some, when they have done wrong, and have *lost the reputation they enjoyed among their fellow creatures*. They have been found out in doing wrong and, sad as it was to them, yet when they felt that they could no longer come to the front and lead as they used to do—when they knew that they must get somewhere in the rear and that if their true character became known, people would shun them—then it was that, like the prodigal son, they said, "I will arise and go to my Father." There is many a man who stands high in popular esteem, but who is never likely to be saved, for he is too proud and self-conceited ever to seek the Savior. But there have been some others who, for a grave fault, have had all their glory trailed in the mire and *then* they have sought the face of Christ. I do not care *how* or *why* they seek that blessed face, so long as they find it and are saved!

There are two instances, then, in which shame drives men to God. First, when a man has lost his own good opinion of himself. And next when he has lost the good opinion of others. Filled with shame, he has often fled to Christ.

So have I also seen it in the case of *failure driving a man to the Strong for strength*. There is a young man who has come lately from the country. He knew the temptations of London, but he said to his father and mother, "You will never hear of your son John doing such things." Ah, John! They have not heard of it, yet, but you have done a great many evil things by now and you ought to be ashamed! If your father finds it out, as likely enough he will, you will be ashamed. But, seeing that you have found *yourself* out, I wish that you would be ashamed before the Lord! O that virtuous John, that silent youth, that dear young man! You were just going to join the Church, were you not? Where were you last night? Ah, not drinking of the Communion cup, I will guarantee you! Where are you now? O John, if you could have seen yourself six months ago, to be what you *now* are, you would not have held your head so high when you came away from your native town! But your failure, that wretched broken back of yours with which you meant to stand so bolt upright should all help to drive you to God—your father's God and your mother's God!

My dear Friend, I pray you seek the face of the Most High and begin again, for, John, though you cannot stand by yourself, God can make you stand! With a new heart and a right spirit, you can do a deal better than you have done in the past in your own strength, which is utter weakness. I have known a teetotaler who has felt himself quite safe because he wore a blue ribbon, to become a drunk, notwithstanding that

very desirable badge. If that is your case, my Brother, when you are ashamed of yourself on that account, as well you may be, go to the Lord for a new heart and a right spirit, and then begin again, that you may truly be what you aspire to be, an example to others! So, you see, that shame in such a case of failure as I have described, may bring a man to Christ.

I have also known men brought to Christ with shame of another sort—*shame of mental terror leading to a humble faith*. A young gentleman felt that he had heard the old-fashioned Gospel long enough and he should like to go and hear the *new* gospel. More light is said to have broken out of late—I can only tell you that it comes from some very dark places—and I do not think there is much light in it. But this gentleman thought that he must know about this new light, and he has kept going further and further. And the new light has led him, like the will-o'-the-wisp does, into all sorts of boggy places. And now he begins to feel that he can do a great many things which once he dared not do, until suddenly the thought occurs to him, "Where have I got to now?" He has become altogether an unbeliever! He who was once almost persuaded to be a Christian has run into very wild ways and nothing is sure with him! It is all rocking to and fro before him, like the waves of the sea, and there is nothing solid left. Ah, now you begin to be ashamed, do you? You are not, after all, so full of wisdom as you thought you were! Come back, then! Come back and believe the old Book, and trust the Savior who has brought so many to the Eternal Kingdom! Believe His Words, follow in His track and this very shame on account of your fancied intellectual prowess, which has turned out to be sheer folly, will bind you, in future, to the simple Cross of Christ and you will never go away from it again!

I want to suggest one thing more before I leave this part of my subject. In this congregation there must be a good many men and women who might do well to look back upon *the utter uselessness of their past lives*. As I looked along these galleries, at the immense preponderance of men in the congregation, which is so usual with us, I thought, "What a number there must be here who, if they threw the weight of their influence in with us, and sought to do good to others, would be immensely valuable to the Church of God!" But are there not many, perhaps even professing Christianity, who, in looking back upon their past lives, will be obliged to say that they have done nothing? What did *you* ever accomplish, dear Friends? There was a lady who had a large sum of money in her possession—much more than sufficient for her needs. She was a Christian woman, living a quiet, comfortable life by the seaside. One night, as she walked up and down the beach, she said to herself, "What have I ever done for Him who died for me? If I were to die now, would anybody miss me? When my life is finished, shall I have accomplished anything?" She felt that she had done nothing, so she went home and ruminated upon what she could do.

She began to live very frugally that she might save all she could and she accumulated quite a large amount, for she had an objective to live for. The Orphanage at Stockwell is the outcome of that good woman's

thought at the seaside! She consecrated her substance to the starting of a home where boys and girls, whose fathers were dead, might be housed. I cannot but think of her and then say to myself, "Are there not many ladies, many gentlemen, many men, many women, who might walk up and down and say, 'Well, now, when I die, who will miss me?'" I believe that there are numbers of people who call themselves Christians who might be tied hand and foot and flung into the Atlantic—and nobody would miss them beyond the two or three members of their own families. They do nothing and they are living for nothing. "Oh, but," they say, "we are accumulating money!" Yes, yes. That is like a jackdaw hiding rubbish behind the door, putting away everything he can get. Poor jackdaw! That is what you are doing, nothing more! To get money is well enough, if you get it that you may use it well. And to learn is right enough, if you learn with the view of teaching others. If our life is not to be wasted, there must be a living to God with a noble purpose! And they who have lived in vain with multitudes of opportunities of doing good, ought to be ashamed—and such shame should bring them to the Savior's feet in humble penitence. God give such shame as that to any here who ought to have it, that they may at once seek the name of the Lord!

III. I must close by speaking only briefly upon the last head of my discourse, which is, THE LORD IS WILLING, NOW, TO RECEIVE THOSE WHO ARE ASHAMED OF THEMSELVES. Let me say that again. The Lord is waiting and willing, now, to receive to the love of His heart those who are thus ashamed of themselves.

I do not think that I need say much to enforce this great Truth of God. Is there one person here who is ashamed of himself because of his past sin? Then you are the man I invite to come to that Savior who bore your shame in His own body on the Cross! You are the sort of man for whom He died. Remember how He, Himself, said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And one mark of the lost is their deep sense of shame when they get to be so ashamed of themselves that they try to hide from the gaze of their fellow creatures. If you are ashamed of yourself, Christ is willing to receive you! Behold, He stands before you with open arms and bids you come and trust Him, that He may give you rest.

You are the sort of man to come to Christ, because, first, *you have the greatest need of Him*. In the time of famine, we give the meal, away, first to the most hungry family. He who has alms to distribute to the poor, if he is wise, will give the most speedy relief to those who are the most destitute. And you, my dear Hearer, are like that if you are ashamed of yourself! You are the bankrupt, you are the beggar, you are the sort of sinner whom Jesus came to save! God's elect are known by this mark—in their own natural estate they are as poor as poverty, itself. If you are empty, there is a full Christ for you! If your last mite is gone, Heaven's treasures are all open for you! Come and take them, take them freely, as freely as you breathe the air, as freely as you would drink of the flowing river! Come and take Christ without question and without delay! Take Him, now, and be happy! And the way to take Him is to *trust* Him, to trust

yourself with Him absolutely! He is a Savior—let Him save *you*. Have no finger in the work, yourself, but leave it all to Him. Commit yourself entirely and absolutely to those mighty hands that molded the heavens and the earth—to those dear hands that were nailed to the Cross! Jesus can save you! He will save you! He must save you! He is pledged to save you! If you have believed in Him, He *has* saved you and you may go your way and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

Next, if you are ashamed of yourself, you are the man to come to Christ because *you will make no bargains with Him*. You will say, "Save me, Lord, at any price, and in any way!" And you are the man who will *give Him all the glory if you are saved*. That is the kind of sinner Jesus loves to save—not one who will run away with the credit of his salvation and say, "I was always good and I had many traces of an excellent character about me before Christ saved me." Such a man might try to divide with the Lord the glory of his salvation, so he is not likely to be saved! But God delights to save those in whom there is no *trace* of goodness, no *hope* of goodness, no *shadow* of goodness—the men and women who not only feel that God may well be ashamed of them, but who are absolutely ashamed of themselves!

In preaching on this important theme, I have not used any grace of diction, nor have I made any display of oratory. I have plainly told you the Gospel message and I have expostulated with those of you who have not considered it. I wish that, by the Grace of God, even before this night passes away, you would come and rest yourselves on Christ. The Holy Spirit is here, blessedly working upon some hearts. If He is not yet working upon others of you, I pray that He may now begin to do so. Remember, my dear Hearers, that you are all mortal and some of you may soon be gone from the earth. During the past week I personally have lost some very choice friends who died quite suddenly. There was a young friend, who was here a Sabbath or so ago. He was taken ill last Sunday afternoon and he was gone in a few hours. His sorrowing friends are absent, today, for he was laid in Norwood Cemetery yesterday afternoon, almost to the breaking of the hearts of his parents and other relatives.

I had a dear old friend with whom I have often stayed at Mentone. On Monday last she seemed as well as ever, but on Wednesday she, too, was dead. Last Friday week I had a letter from a friend at Plymouth, saying that he was coming up to see me and asking at what hour I could meet him? I said, "Five in the afternoon." It was our honored friend, Mr. Serpell. He did not come, but I received a note to say that he was not quite well. On Monday he addressed the Chamber of Commerce and while he was speaking, he fell back, apparently in a fainting fit, and so died. I have, therefore, lost some who have always been good helpers and kind friends to me. And I seem to feel more than ever I did that I am living in a dying world. It might have been any one of you! It might have been myself. Come, then, and let us all seek the Lord at once! Let us each one seek Him, now. "If *you* seek Him, He will be found of you." God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 12; JEREMIAH 8; 9:1.

Psalm 12:1. *Help, LORD; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.* The Psalm speaks of a very discouraging time and records a very dreary fact, but the Psalmist is wise and turns to God with that short, sententious prayer, "Help, Lord."

2, 3. *They speak vanity, every one, with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things.* They will not be able to continue speaking falsely and proudly forever—a shovelful of earth from the grave-digger's spade will silence them—and a terrible display of God's Justice will make them speechless forever.

4, 5. *Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.* That is all it is, only a puff—the biggest brag of the wicked, the most tremendous threat against the Lord's people is but a puff, after all, and God will set His people high above all those who puff at them.

6-8. *The Words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted.* Now let us read in Jeremiah's prophecy, Chapter Eight. Remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, that Jeremiah had the very sorrowful task of warning a people who would not give heed to his warnings. He prophesied evil—evil which began to come upon the people even while he prophesied, yet they would not turn to God! I sometimes think Jeremiah was the greatest of all the Prophets because, in the teeth of perpetual opposition, with no measure of success whatever, he continued to be faithful to God and to deliver the message with which he was sent, weeping all the while over people who would not weep for themselves.

Jeremiah 8:1, 2. *At that time, says the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the Prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of their graves: and they shall spread them before the sun and the moon, and all the host of Heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.* This is an awful picture. Here is a nation that would worship the sun, and the moon, and the stars, instead of worshipping God. Here they are, and their bones lie exposed to the sun and moon and stars which they had worshipped—dead people before lifeless gods! This is all that idolatry produces for the ruined people who have turned away from their true Friend and Helper—their bones lie exposed in the presence of the things that they made to be their gods! How dreadful is the result of sin! No matter what modern preachers say, a sinful course must be a disastrous

one. It is in the very nature of things that we cannot go the wrong road and yet be happy. Wrong must end in wrong, it cannot be otherwise—the universal conviction in the conscience of man teaches us this fact.

3. *And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places where I have driven them, says the LORD of Hosts.* These people would not have God. They cast Him off and now He casts *them* so far off that they feel that it would have been better for them if they had never been born, and they would rather die than live—"Death shall be chosen rather than life."

4. *Moreover you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?* The old proverb says, "It is a long lane that has no turning." So the Lord seems to ask, "Will these men always go on in sin? Will they always turn away from Me? They change from bad to worse; will they never change from worse to better?"

5. *Why, then, is this people of Jerusalem slid back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.* Perseverance in evil is the very venom of evil. When men not only backslide, but continue to perpetually backslide, they are doubly staining their garments in the scarlet of iniquity! When men "refuse to return" to the Lord and continue to refuse to return, surely they are digging their own graves exceedingly deep.

6. *I hearkened and heard.*—It is God who is speaking—"I hearkened and heard."—

6. *But they spoke not aright.* "I tried to discover whether there was any good in them. I listened to hear them offer a prayer. I watched to mark anything like repentance in them."

6. *No man repented of wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle.* See how God described these people? When He might have expected that some of them would relent and, in their thoughtful moments turn to a better mind, they did not do so. But, as the horse, when he hears the war trumpet, rushes into the midst of the fray, so did these people go headlong into sin with desperate resolve. Careless of wounds and death, they rushed to their destruction! I hope that this is not the case with any of my hearers at this time. I pray God that it may not be so!

7. *Yes, the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the LORD.* The birds take wing across the sea when the dampness of autumn comes and, by-and-by, when spring returns, they twitter about our roofs, again, punctual to the appointed time. But men come not to God in their season—they fly not from their sins, they return not to the Lord. The crane and the swallow rebuke the foolishness of men who know not the time to return to God, and know not their way back to Him.

8, 9. *How can you say, We are wise, and the Law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have re-*

jected the Word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them? This test may serve as a motto for some, in these days, who believe themselves to be wiser than Scripture and who fancy that, in their great wisdom, they are able to correct this Inspired Book! Many set up in the trade of "Bible makers" nowadays—they profess to be the revealers of Revelation, the improvers of this blessed Book of God. Ah, but this passage still stands true, "They have rejected the Word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?"

10, 11. *Therefore will I give their wives to others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for everyone from the least even to the greatest is given to covetousness, from the Prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.* This is a very mischievous thing. For the preacher of Christ to be honest and fearless, and to speak unpalatable Truth is right in God's sight. But to gloss over the great facts about sin and judgment, and to say to the ungodly, "Oh, do not trouble yourselves! 'Peace, peace; when there is no peace'"—this is to murder the souls of men! And I doubt not that the blood of multitudes will be upon the skirts of those teachers who have tried to make everything pleasant to the wicked, and to suit the age in which they lived. The Lord Himself says of the Prophet and priest who have dealt falsely, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."

12. *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.* What a striking expression is this! To what a condition of shameless obstinacy have men's minds been brought when it can be said of them, "They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." The very power to be ashamed was taken from them. Surely, almost the last ray of any hope of salvation must be gone from the man who cannot blush at the thought of his own iniquity!

12-18. *Therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the LORD. I will surely consume them, says the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God has put us to silence, and given us water to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, says the LORD. When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.* Because the people refused this testimony, because they seemed set on mischief and resolved to die, therefore the Prophet's heart was faint within him.

19, 20. *Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their engraved images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.* I will read that 20th verse again—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." This may be the lament of some of my present hearers—and if it is, may they now bow before the Lord in true penitence of heart, and may He, in pity, save them this very hour! The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but, oh, may they soon be saved!

21. *For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me.* That is the man to be God's Prophet, the man who makes the sorrows of his people to be his own sorrows, who does not perform the duties of his office as a mere matter of profession, but enters into his service with a weeping heart, longing to be made a blessing to men.

22. *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?* No, there is none. There is balm in Christ, there is a Physician who once hung on Calvary's Cross—but there is no balm and no physician in Gilead. If there were—

22. *Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

Jeremiah 9:1. *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!* This is how God's servants feel about the dying and perishing souls all around them. They cannot bear the thought of the sinner's awful doom—it brings continuous heartbreak and heaviness of spirit upon them. That men should eternally perish—that they should bring on their own heads the doom of their own sin is no small thing and, therefore, the Lord's servant mourns over those who mourn not for themselves! God save every one of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—552, 544, 521, 522.

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

PAUL'S PERSUASION
NO. 2492

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1886.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come nor height, nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 8:38, 39.

A CHRISTIAN Brother was asked, one day, "To what persuasion do you belong?" He parried the question at first, for he did not think that it was very important for him to answer it. So the enquirer asked him again, "But what is your persuasion?" "Well," he said, "if you must know my persuasion, this is it, '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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'" I also am of that persuasion. Somebody says, "That is Calvinistic doctrine." If you like to call it so, you may, but I would rather that you made the mistake of the good old Christian woman who did not know much about these things and who said that she herself was "a high *Calvarist*." She liked "high Calvary" preaching and so do I. And it is "high Calvary" doctrine that I find in this passage. He who hung on high Calvary was such a lover of the souls of men that from that glorious fact I am brought to this blessed persuasion, "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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul was fully persuaded of this great Truth of God. Did he not learn it by Revelation? I doubt not that God at first supernaturally revealed it to him, but yet, in order that he might be still more sure of it, God was pleased to reveal it to him again and again, till his trembling heart was more and more completely persuaded of it. It may have seemed to him, as it does to some of us, to be almost too good to be true and, therefore, the Holy Spirit so shed abroad this Truth in the Apostle's mind that he yielded to it and said, "I am persuaded." He may have thought, with a great many in the present day, that it was necessary to caution Believers

against falling from Grace, and to be a little dubious about their final perseverance in the ways of God, but, if he ever had such fears, he gave them up and said, "I am—yes, I am *persuaded* that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Beside that, I suppose that the Apostle was persuaded through reasoning with himself from other grand Truths of God. He said to himself, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." He argued that if the death of Christ reconciled God's enemies to Himself, the life of Christ will certainly preserve safely those who are the friends of God! That was good argument, was it not?

I have no doubt that Paul also argued with himself from the nature of the work of Grace which is the implantation of a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. Christ spoke of it as the putting of a well into us and He said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And as Paul thought of the nature of this new life, he felt persuaded that it would not die—he was convinced that he would never be separated from the love of God!

Moreover, I doubt not that Paul remembered the doctrine of the Union of Believers with Christ, and he said to himself, "Shall Christ lose the members of His body? Shall a foot or an arm be lopped off from Him? Shall an eye of Christ be put out in darkness?" And he could not think that it could be so! As he turned the matter over mentally, he said, "If they are, indeed, one with Christ, I am persuaded that nothing can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, if I could extend the time for this service to 24 hours, I might give you all the arguments, or the most of the arguments, which support the blessed Truth of the non-separation of Believers from the love of Christ. As for my own convictions, I can never doubt it! I am fully persuaded concerning it. This Truth seems to me to have struck its roots into all the other Truths of Scripture and to have twisted itself among the granite rocks which are the very foundation of our hope! I, too, am persuaded by a thousand arguments, and persuaded beyond all question, that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Yet more, I fancy that Paul had been persuaded of this Truth by his own experience. He had endured persecution, imprisonment, famine, shipwreck. He had suffered from scorn and scandal, pain of body and depression of spirit. "A night and a day," he said, "I have been in the deep." And I will guarantee you that many a night and many a day he had been in *spiritual* deeps, yet he had survived them all and he could testify to the faithfulness of his God and say at the end, as the issue of his sufferings, "I am persuaded that nothing in creation is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Thus he was persuaded of this Truth of God by Revelation, by argument and by experience. And I should like you to notice that he was not

only persuaded that *none* of the powers he mentions *will separate us from the love of Christ*, but that they *cannot*! He puts it thus—they are not able to separate us. Yet these are the strongest forces imaginable—death, life, angels, principalities, powers, the dreary present and the darker future. Paul summons all our foes and sets them in battle array against us! And when he has added up the total of all their legions, he says that he is persuaded that they shall not be able—shall not be *able*, mark you—to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

I. In this discourse I am only going to handle the topic of Paul's persuasion. Paul says, "I am persuaded," and it is implied that, first, HE IS PERSUADED OF THE LOVE OF GOD. He could not be persuaded that nothing could separate us from a thing which did not exist! And so he is persuaded, first of all, of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Come, my Brothers and Sisters, *are you persuaded of the love of God?* Are you intelligently persuaded not only that God is Love, but that God loves *you*? Are you fully persuaded of the love of God—the love of the Father who chose us because He would choose us for nothing but His love? The love of Jesus, the Son of God, who bowed Himself from His Glory that He might redeem us from our shame? The love of the Holy Spirit who has quickened us and who comes to dwell in us that we may, by-and-by, dwell with Him? Are you persuaded of this love of God to you? Happy man, happy woman, who can truly say, "I am persuaded that God loves me. I have thought it over, I have fully considered it, I have thoroughly weighed it and I have come to this conclusion, that the love of God is shed abroad in my heart."

Then, next, it is *the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*. That is, His great love in giving His dear Son to die for us. I am not going to expatiate upon this wondrous theme. The thoughts are too great to need to be spun out, or you can do that in your private meditations. Is it not a wonderful thing that God loved *me*, and loved *you*, (let us individualize it)—that God so loved you that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life? He gave His Son for you! And for me. It is as though one bartered a diamond to buy a common pebble from the brook, or gave away an empire to purchase some foul thing not worthy of being picked off a dunghill! Yet we are persuaded that He did it, and that the love of God is most clearly to be seen in the fact that He gave His Son Jesus Christ to die instead of us.

And, once more, we are persuaded of *the love of God to all who are in Christ*. We believe in Christ and so we come to be in Christ by our believing. And now we are persuaded that to as many as receive Christ, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name and, therefore, all who believe in Jesus are beloved of the Lord, not because of anything good in them, but for Jesus Christ's sake. He loves Christ so much that He loves us notwithstanding our

unloveliness, because Jesus Christ has covered us with His robe of righteousness and He has said, "My Father, consider them as lost in Me, hidden in Me, made one with Me." And the Father says, "Yes, My beloved Son, I will love them. Jesus, I will love them for Your sake."

So we are persuaded of these three things. First, that God loves us. Next, that God has shown His love to us by the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. And then, that His Divine Love comes streaming down to us because we are in Christ and are loved for His sake. I want you, dear Friends, to get this persuasion into you. If you are not so persuaded, here is honey, but you do not taste it! Here is light, but you do not see it! Here is Heaven, but you do not enter the pearly gate. Beloved, if you would be saved, you *must be persuaded of this Truth of God*—and when you are persuaded of it, you will know the joy of it.

II. That leads me to pass on to the second thing of which Paul was persuaded. It does not appear on the surface of the text, but if you look a minute you will see that PAUL WAS PERSUADED THAT HE AND ALL THE SAINTS ARE JOINED TO GOD BY LOVE. Otherwise he could not have said, "I am persuaded that things present and things to come shall not be able to *separate* us." We must be *joined together*, or else the Apostle would not talk of separation! There is a picture for you to contemplate—God and ourselves joined together by the bonds of love in Christ Jesus. God loves Christ and we love Christ, so we have a meeting place—we love the same blessed Person—and that brings us to love one another.

There are two things that join God and a Believer together. The first is God's love to the Believer. And the second is the Believer's love to God. It is as when two dear friends lovingly embrace with their arms around each other's neck—there is a double link binding them together. Or, to come nearer the truth, it is as when a mother puts her arms around the neck of her little child and her child puts its tiny arms about the mother's neck—that is how we and God are joined together.

Are you persuaded that it is so with you, dear Friends? Can you, each one, say, as you sit in your pew tonight, "*God loves me, and that love joins Him to me"*? And, *"I love God, and that love joins me to Him"?* I believe that the Apostle was persuaded that these two blessed links existed between Him and the great God, and He was persuaded that neither of those two links would ever be broken. God could not withdraw from Paul, His embrace of love, and Paul felt that, by Divine Grace, he could not withdraw his embrace of love from his God. But he must have been, first of all, persuaded that both those embraces were there. Are *you*, my dear Hearer, persuaded that it is so with you? Are your arms about the neck of the great Father? Are the great Father's loving arms about your neck? Be persuaded of that Truth and you are, indeed, happy men and happy women! What more could you wish to say than to be able truthfully to say that?

III. Now, to come to what is evidently in the text, and to dwell upon it for a little while, Paul, being thus persuaded that there was a love of God

and that there was a union through love between the soul and its God, now says that HE IS PERSUADED THAT NOTHING CAN EVER BREAK THOSE BONDS.

He begins by mentioning some of the things that are supposed to separate. And the first is, *death*. It sends a shiver through some when we begin to speak of death and the bravest man who ever lived may well tremble at the thought that he must soon meet the king of terrors. But, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ loves us and we love Christ, we may well be persuaded that death will not break the union which exists between us! I have lately seen one or two of our friends almost in the very article of death. I think that they cannot long survive, but I have come out from their bedchamber greatly cheered by their holy peacefulness and joy! I can see that death does not break the Believer's peace—it seems, rather, to strengthen it! I can see that there is no better place than the brink of Jordan, after all.

I have seen the Brothers and the Sisters, too, sit with their feet in the narrow stream, and they have been singing all the while! Death has not abated a single note of their song! No, more. I have known some of them who are like the fabled swan which is said never to sing till it dies. Some of them who were rather heavy and sad of spirit in their days of health, have grown joyous and glad as they have neared the eternal Kingdom. There is nothing about death that the Believer should construe into a fear that it will separate him from the love of Christ. Christ loved you when He died—He will love you when you die! It was after death—remember that—it was *after* death that His heart poured out the tribute of blood and water by which we have the double cure! See, then, how He loves us in death and after death! There is nothing about death that should make Christ cease to love us—our bodies will be under His protection and guardian care and our souls shall be with Christ, which is "far better" than being anywhere else. Do not, therefore, fear death!

In the days when this Epistle was written, the saints had to die very cruel deaths by fire, by the cross, by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. They were sawn in two. They wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Yet they never feared death. It is very amazing how the Church of Christ always seems to brighten up at the idea of death by martyrdom. The grandest, most heroic days in Christendom were the days of the Pagan persecutions, when, to be a Christian meant to be doomed to die! In English history, the days of Mary, when the saints at Smithfield bore witness for Christ at the stake, were grand days! And in Madagascar—did you ever read a more thrilling story than the record of the bravery of those Christian men and women who suffered the tyrant's cruelty? And at the present moment, in Central Africa, where Bishop Hannington has been put to death, we hear that there is an edict for the killing of Christians, yet hundreds of black men came forward to confess that they are followers of Christ. It is a wonderful thing. We do not ask for these persecutions, but they might do us

great good if they came. Certainly, this wondrous ship of Christ's Church, when she plows her way through waves of blood, makes swifter headway to the heavenly haven than she does in times of calm. So, beloved Friends, there is nothing in death to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle says next, "*nor life*." I must confess that I am more afraid of life than of death. "Oh," says one, "but dying is such hard work." Do you think so? Why, dying is the *end* of work—it is *living* that is hard work! I am not so much afraid of dying as I am of sinning—that is ten times worse than death. And what if some of us should live very many years? "There's the respect that makes calamity of so long a life," that there is so much longer time for temptation and trial. If one might have his choice, one might be content to have a short warfare and to enter upon the crown at once. But we may be permitted to live on to extreme old age—do you dread it? There is nothing about old age to separate you from the love of Christ! He has made and He will bear—even to hoar hairs will He carry you—therefore, be not afraid. The ills of life are many, the trials of life are many, the temptations of life are more. O life, life, life here below, you are, after all, little better than a lingering death! The true life is hereafter. "Yet," says Paul, "I am persuaded that life cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." He means that if we were tempted by the love of life to deny Christ, we would be strengthened so that we would not deny Him even to save our lives, for His people have been brave enough in this respect in all times. Paul counted not his life dear to him that he might win Christ and be found in Him. Therefore he says that he is persuaded that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Then he mentions *angels, principalities and powers*. Well, the good angels cannot separate us from the love of God—we are sure that they would not wish to do so! And whatever spiritual creatures may frequent the earth, *they* cannot separate us from the love of Christ. Does the Apostle mean devils—fallen angels that would overthrow us, some of them as "principalities" by their dignity, others of them as, "powers" by their subtle, crafty force—does he refer to devils? I think he does and this, then, is our comfort, that if we have to meet the arch-fiend, himself, foot to foot in terrible duel—and we may, for men of God have had so to meet him, and he that does battle with the adversary will gain nothing by it but sweat of blood and aching heart, even if he shall win the victory, so that we may well pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One"—still we have this comfort, that even though he may rejoice over us for a moment and may cast us down, he cannot *separate us from the love of Christ*! He may open many of our veins and make us bleed even to utter weakness, but the life-vein he can never touch!

There is a secret something about the Christian of which Satan wishes to spoil, but which is entirely out of his reach, so the saint sings, "I am persuaded that neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers can sepa-

rate me from the love of Christ. You may come on, battalions of the adversary, with all your terrible might sweeping hypocrites and deceivers before you like chaff before the wind, but as many as are linked to Christ by His eternal love shall stand firm against you, like the solid rocks against the billows of the sea." Therefore, be confident, dear Brothers and Sisters, that these spiritual beings, these unseen forces, these strange and mysterious powers which you cannot fully understand can, *none of them*, separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord!

Having summarily disposed of all of them, Paul adds, "*nor things present.*" I like this thought. He is persuaded that things present cannot separate us from Christ. I wonder what the things present are with you, my dear Hearers. One of you says, "Well, it is an empty pocket with me." Others will say, "It is a family of children who have no bread." Some may say, "It is the prospect of bankruptcy." Another will say, "Ah, it is an insidious disease that will soon carry me to my grave!" A mother will say, "It is rebellious children who are breaking my heart." Well, whatever it may be—and the woes of the present are very many—there is *nothing* that can separate us from the love of Christ!

I was feeling very heavy, I scarcely knew why, when I caught at this text. And it seemed to come in so pleasantly for me when my spirits were down. "Things present." Even a depressed and desponding state of mind, whatever the cause of it is—whether weariness of brain or heaviness of heart—cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus!

Then, what can it do? Why, sometimes it can *drive us to Christ*—let us pray that it may! But anyhow, things present cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Then the Apostle says, "*nor things to come.*" Well, I wonder what is "to come." O Friends, I sometimes feel a strange trembling when I stand upon this platform to speak to you because the words that I utter are often so remarkably fulfilled of God as really to amaze me! Two Sunday nights ago, when I stood here to preach about the long-suffering of God being salvation, [Sermon No. 1997, Volume 33: *God's Long-suffering—An Appeal to the Conscience"*—Read/download at http://www.spurgeongems.org] I spoke, in the middle of the sermon, as if personally addressing someone who was present, who had lately been ill with fever, and who had come to the Tabernacle, still weak and scarcely recovered. There was a young man here who exactly answered to the description I gave, and who wrote home to his mother something like this (I have the letter)—"I went to Spurgeon's Tabernacle on Sunday night and I heard such a sermon! I never felt anything like it before. He looked at me and picked me out as if I was the only man there, and described me exactly."

Then he gave the words I used and continued, "It was a true description of myself. If the sermon is printed, pray get me a copy that I may read it when I come home, for I felt the power of it and I prayed, then and there, that God would bring me to my mother's God and save me." That

was on the Sunday, mark you. On the Wednesday he was at Gravesend—there was a collision and he and five others were drowned. The mother received that letter about an hour before she heard the news that her son was dead—and the parents wrote to tell me what a balm it was to their spirits that God's Providence should bring their boy in here just before he was to meet his God.

So, you see, I cannot help wondering what the "things to come" will be for you who are here. With some—who can tell?—as the Lord lives, there may be but a step between you and death. And if you have no Christ, and have never tasted of His love, you are running awful risks even in going one step further. You have walked on, and on, and on, and there has up to now always been something beneath your feet—but the next step may precipitate you into the abyss! Therefore, seek the Lord now before it be too late! As for the child of God, he knows no more about his immediate future than you do, but he knows this—that there is nothing in the future that can separate Him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Therefore, let the future bring with it what it may, all will be well with him.

Now the Apostle adds two more expressions, "*nor height, nor depth*." There are some people who dwell in the heights. I am rather pleased to meet with dear friends who never have any doubts or fears, but are always full of joy and ecstasy, and who go on to tell us that they have left all these things behind and have risen to the heights of bliss. But what I do not like is when they look down from those awful heights upon us poor Christians and say that they cannot believe in us because we are anxious, because we practice self-examination, because we have to struggle against sin! They do not struggle—*they* have risen beyond all struggling—they rub their hands and sing of everlasting victory. Well, my dear Brother—you up there on the topmost bough—you will not frighten me with all your heights though I cannot get up there—and I could not stay there if I could get up so high! This one thing I know, I am sure that there is nothing in those heights that can separate me from the love of Christ! I will stick to that. Whatever revelations there may be to the enthusiastic, whatever raptures and ecstasies and extreme delights any may have, they cannot separate me from Christ! I am glad that you have them, Brother, may you always keep them. And if I cannot have them, I shall sit down in my struggles and temptations and *still* say that there is nothing in the heights—in high doctrine or in high living—that can separate me from the love of Christ!

I am a little more acquainted with the depths and I meet with many Christian people who are very familiar with those depths. I could indicate some dear friends here who I hope are not in the depths right now, but I have seen them there. You were very low down, Brother—we had to stoop to call to you—the waters of God's waves and billows seemed to have gone over you. You have been down to the depths and I have been there with you. But there is nothing in the depths that can separate us from

the love of Christ! Jonah went down to the depths of the sea, but he came up with this testimony, that there was nothing there to separate us from the love of God! No,; though you should be weary of your life, though you should never have a ray of light by the month together, there is nothing there to separate you from the love of Christ! You may go down, down, down, till you seem to have got beyond the reach of help from mortal man, but there are cords and bands which bind you to Christ that even these depths can never break, come what may.

The Apostle ends the list by saying, "*nor any other creature*." It may be read, "Nor any other created thing, nor anything that ever is to be created," *nothing* shall ever separate us from the love of Christ. Oh, what a sweet persuasion is this! Let us go forward into the future, however dark it is, with this confidence that at least one thing we know—the love of Christ will hold us fast and, by His Grace, we will hold fast to Him. We are married to Him and we shall never be divorced. We are joined to Him by a living, loving, lasting union that never shall be broken!

IV. I have done when I have called your attention to one more thing. Did you notice how the text begins? It begins with the word "for." "*For* I am persuaded." What does that mean? That shows that this is used as an argument drawn from something mentioned before. What is that? "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, *for* I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life," and so on. It seems, then, dear Friends, that PAUL'S PERSUASION HELPED TO BRING HIM TO VICTORY.

He was persuaded that Christ would not leave him and that he would not be allowed to leave Christ—and *this stirred him up to deeds of daring*. Oh, where there is real cause for fighting, there cannot be victory without striving! Paul was so persuaded that Christ would never leave him, that he became a fighter, and he went in with all his might against the world, the flesh and the devil. Some say that this doctrine would send us to sleep—it never does—it wakes us up! The doctrine that I am quite sure to gain the victory makes me fight. If I did not know that I should win it, I might think that I would let discretion be the better part of my valor, but, being assured that Christ will be with me all through, I feel incited to war against all that is evil that I may overcome it in *His* strength!

Yes, and the Apostle seems to hint that this persuasion that Christ would not leave him *made him aspire to a very great victory*. Men do not reach what they do not aspire to—and Paul says, "We are more than conquerors." Therefore, he aspired to be a complete and perfect conqueror. And this persuasion *helped him to gain his aspiration*. By God's Grace, the man who trusts in Christ's eternal love and believes in the Immutability of the Divine Purpose and, therefore, is persuaded that he can never be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus—he is the man to win a glorious victory by his faith in his great God! Therefore, let us be encouraged to go on and fight against everything that is evil, especially in ourselves, and tread down all the powers of darkness

since *nothing* can stand against us while Christ is for us! And for us He must be forever and ever.

I wish that all here present had a share in my blessed text. It is an intense regret to me that I cannot present it to some of you. You do not know the love of Christ. Oh, that you would come and learn it! May the sweet Spirit lead you to Jesus, cause you to look to Him upon the Cross and trust in Him! Then you will have something worth hearing, for you will have a love that never changes—a love that shall never be separated from you nor you from it! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 6.

In the previous chapter Paul was writing to some who ought to have been teachers, but who still needed to be taught the first principles of the Gospel. They were such babes in Grace that they needed the milk of the Word—the very simplest elements of Gospel Truth—and not the strong meat of solid doctrine. The Apostle, however, desires that the Hebrew Believers should understand the more sublime doctrines of the Gospel and so be like men of full age who can eat strong meat. In this chapter he exhorts them to seek to attain to this standard.

Verse 1. *Therefore leaving the principles*—The rudiments, the elementary Truths of God—

1. *Of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection.*—Let us go from the school to the university. Let us have done with our first spelling books and advance into the higher classics of the Kingdom.

1. *Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.* Let us make sure that the foundation is laid, but let us not have continually to lay it again. Let us go on believing and repenting, as we have done, but let us not have to begin believing and begin repenting—let us go on to something beyond that stage of experience.

2. *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* Let us take these things for granted and never dispute about them anymore, but go on to still higher matters.

3. *And this will we do, if God permits.* We must keep on going forward. There is no such thing in the Christian life as standing still—and we dare not turn back.

4-6. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away*—Note that Paul does not say, "If they shall fall," but, "If they shall fall AWAY"—if the religion which they have professed shall cease to have any power over them—then it shall be impossible—

6. *To renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.* If all the processes

of Grace fail in the case of any professors, what is to be done with them? If the Grace of God does not enable them to overcome the world—if the blood of Christ does not purge them from sin, what more can be done? Upon this supposition, God's utmost has been tried and has failed. Mark that Paul does not say that all this could ever happen, but that, IF it could, the person concerned would be like a piece of ground which brought forth nothing but thorns and briers.

7, 8. *For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: but that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near to cursing; whose end is to be burned.* If, after having plowed this ground and sown it and, after it has been watered by the dew and rain of Heaven, no good harvest ever comes of it, every wise man would leave off tilling it. He would say, "My labor is all thrown away on such a plot of ground as this, nothing more can be done with it, for after having done my utmost nothing but weeds is produced, so now it must be left to itself." You see, my dear Hearers, if it were *possible* for the work of Grace in your souls to be of no avail, nothing more could be done for you. You have had God's utmost effort expended upon your behalf and there remains no other method of salvation for you. I believe that there have been some professors, such as Judas and Simon Magus, who have come very near to this condition—and others who are said, after a certain sort, to have believed, to have received the Holy Spirit in miraculous gifts and to have been specially enlightened so as to have been able to teach others—but the work of Grace did not affect their *hearts*, it did not renew their natures, it did not transform their spirits—and so it was impossible to renew them to repentance. Now notice what Paul says—

9. *But, Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.* Harsh as the Apostle's words may seem, they are not meant for you who are really Believers in Christ and in whom the Holy Spirit has *worked a complete change of heart and life.* Paul is not speaking of such as you.

10. *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister.* If you have proven by your works that the Grace of God is within you, God will not forget you. He will not leave you, He will not cast you away. You know the contrast in the speech between different persons concerning this doctrine. One will wickedly say, "If I am a child of God, I may live as I like." That is damnable doctrine! Another will say, "If I am a child of God, I shall not want to live as I like, but as God likes, and I shall be led by the Grace of God into the path of holiness! And through Divine Grace I shall persevere in that way of holiness right to the end." That is quite another doctrine and it is the true teaching of the Word of God.

11. *And we desire that everyone of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end.* Keep it up! Be as earnest, today, as you

were 20 years ago, when you were baptized and joined the Church—"Show the same diligence to the end." Still, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

12-15. *That you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.* Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, you and I also are patiently to endure, to hold on even to the end, and God's sure promise will never fail us!

16-18. *For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show to 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.* It seems a great change in this chapter from the sad tone at the beginning to the joyous note at the end, but, indeed, there is no contradiction between the two. Paul is but giving us two sides of the Truth of God—both equally true—the one necessary for our warning, the other admirable for our consolation. God will not leave you, my Brethren! He has pledged Himself by Covenant to you and He has given an oath that His Covenant shall stand. Therefore, be of good courage, and press forward in the Divine Life, for your work of faith and labor of love are not in vain in the Lord! So let us "lay hold upon the hope set before us"—

19. *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil.* Sailors throw their anchors downwards—we throw ours upwards! Their anchor goes within the veil of the waters into the deeps of the sea—ours goes within the veil of Glory, into the heights of Heaven where Jesus sits at the right hand of God— "within the veil."—

20. *Where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—735, 738.

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

"A MAN NAMED MATTHEW"
NO. 2493

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 12, 1885.

"As Jesus passed forth from there, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him." Matthew 9:9.

This is a little bit of autobiography. Matthew wrote this verse about himself. I can fancy him, with his pen in his hand, writing all the rest of this Gospel, and I can imagine that when he came to this very personal passage, he laid the pen down a minute and wiped his eyes. He was coming to a most memorable and pathetic incident in his own life and he recorded it with tremulous emotion. "As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew." The Evangelist could not have said much less about himself than this. "He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him." I do not think there is any part of Matthew's Gospel that touched him more than this portion in which he was writing down the story of Divine Love to himself and of how he, himself, was called to be a disciple of Christ.

I notice a very grave distinction between Matthew's way of recording his call and the very general style of converts relating their experience nowadays. Today the man seems to come boldly forth, with a springing step and a boastful air, and shouts out that he was the biggest blackguard who ever lived! And he tells with great gusto how he used to curse and to swear, and he talks as if there was something to be proud of in all that evil! Sit down, Sir! Sit down and give us the story in this style, "As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew"—that is about as much as we care to know. Tell us as briefly as you can, how the Lord called you and enabled you to follow Him. There is a modesty about this narrative—not a *mock* modesty, by any means—there is no concealment of the facts of the case, there is no obscuration of the Grace of Christ, but there is a concealment of Matthew, himself! He mentions that he was a publican. In the list that he gives of the Apostles he calls himself, "Matthew the Publican." The other Evangelists hardly ever call him a publican—they do not even call him, "Matthew," as a rule. They give his more respectable name, "Levi," and they have more to say of him than he says of himself. It is always best for us, if there is anything to be said in our praise, not to say it ourselves, but to let somebody else say it.

Brother, if your trumpeter is dead, put the trumpet away! When that trumpet needs to be blown, there will be a trumpeter found to use it—but you need never blow it yourself!

This verse reads to me so tenderly that I do not know how to communicate to you just how I feel about it. I have tried to imagine myself to be Matthew and to have to write this story. And I am sure that if I had not been Inspired as Matthew was, I should never have done it so beautifully as he has done it, for it is so full of everything that is touching, tender, timid, true, and gracious—"As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him."

Please notice—perhaps you did notice in our reading—where Matthew has put this story. It is placed immediately after a miracle. Some question has been raised, in a *Harmony of the Gospels*, as to the exact position of this fact, whether it did actually occur just when Matthew tells it or whether he rather studied effect than chronology. Sometimes the Evangelists seem to overlook the chronological position of a statement and put it out of its proper place, that it may be more in its place for some other purpose. Well, I do not know about the chronology of this event, but it seems to me very beautiful on Matthew's part to record his call just here. "There," he said, "I will tell them one miracle about the Savior having made the palsied man take up his bed and walk, and then I will tell them of *another miracle*—a greater miracle, still—how there was another man who was more than palsied, chained to his gains and to an injurious traffic, yet who, nevertheless, at the command of Christ, quit that occupation and all his gains that he might follow his Divine Master."

Whenever you think about your own conversion, dear Friend, regard it as a miracle, and always say within yourself, "It was a wonder of Grace! If the conversion of anybody was ever a miracle of mercy, it was *my* conversion! It was an extraordinary condescension on Christ's part to look on such a sinner as I was—and nothing but a miracle of Grace could have saved me."

So Matthew tells his own story very tenderly, but he tells it very suggestively, putting it just after a most notable miracle! And I think that the Evangelist thought there was some similarity between the miracle and his own conversion, for there is nothing that palsies a man towards spiritual things like the lust of gold. Let a man be engaged in oppression and extortion, as the publicans were, and the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron—and the extortioner is not likely to feel or desire that which is right. Yet here was a man, up to his neck in an evil occupation, who in a moment, at the Divine Call, is made to part with all his hopes of gain that he may follow Christ! It was a miracle similar and equal to the raising of the palsied man who took up his bed and walked! You, too, dear Friend, can trace a parallel, perhaps, between your conversion and some miracle of the Master. Was it, in your case, the casting out of devils? Was it the opening of the eyes of the blind? Was it the unstopping of deaf ears and the loosing of a silent tongue? Was it the raising of the dead, or even more than that, was it the calling forth of corruption, itself,

out of the grave, as when Jesus cried, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus came forth?

In any case, I invite you who know the Lord, in the silence of your souls, to sit down and think—not about Matthew, but about *yourselves*. I shall think about "a man named Spurgeon" and you can think about "a man named John Smith," or, "Thomas Jones," or whatever your name may happen to be. If the Lord has looked upon you in love, you can put your own name into the text, and say, "As Jesus passed forth from there, he saw a man named James," or "John," or "Thomas." And you women may put in your names, too, you Maries and Janes and so forth. Just sit and think how Jesus said to each one of you, "Follow Me," and how in that happy moment you did arise and follow Him—and from that hour you could truly sing, as you have often sung since—

"'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
Until in life's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear."

With some degree of rapidity I will try to conduct your thoughts to various points of this interesting and instructive narrative.

I. The first is that THIS CALL OF THE MAN NAMED MATTHEW SEEMED ACCIDENTAL AND UNLIKELY.

"As Jesus passed forth from there," just as He was going about some work or other, going away from Capernaum, perhaps, or merely going down one of its streets, it was as He "passed forth" that this event happened. As He passed, "He saw a man named Matthew." That is the way we talk when we speak of things that, as we say, "happen," we scarcely know why. Now, dear Friend, was that how *you* were converted? I do not know how long ago it was, but it did so happen, did it not? Yet it did not seem to you to be a very likely event ever to occur.

Looking back at the case of Matthew, it does seem, now, to have been a very unlikely thing that he should become a follower of Jesus. *Capernaum was Christ's own city, so He had often been there, yet Matthew remained unsaved.* Christ had not seen that "man named Matthew" in the special way in which He saw him on this particular occasion and you, dear Friend, went to a place of worship a great many times before you were converted. Perhaps you had been there regularly since you were a child! Yet it was not till that one particular day of Grace that anything special happened to you, even as it was not till the time recorded in our text that something very special happened to the man named Matthew.

Further, at that time, *Jesus seemed as if He was about other business,* for, we read, "as Jesus passed forth from there." And perhaps it seemed to you that the preacher was aiming at something else when his word was blessed to you. He was, maybe, comforting Believers, yet God sent the message home to *you*, a poor unconverted sinner. Strange, was it not, both in Matthew's case and your own?

At that time, also, *there are many other people in Capernaum, yet Christ did not call them*. He saw them, but not in the particular way in which He saw the man named Matthew. And, in like manner, on that day of mercy when you received the blessing of salvation, perhaps there was a crowded congregation, but, as far as you know, the blessing did not reach anybody but yourself. Why, then, did it come to you? You do not know, unless you have learned to look behind the curtains in the holy place and to see by the light of the lamp within the veil. If you have looked there, you know that when Jesus Christ is passing by, what men call His "accidents" are all *intentional*—the glances of His eyes are all ordained from eternity! And when He looks upon anyone, He does it according to the everlasting purpose and the foreknowledge of God! The Lord had looked long before on that man named Matthew, so, in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ must necessarily pass that way and He must look in love and mercy upon that man named Matthew. He saw him, then, because, long before, He foresaw him!

I cannot tell how you happen to be here, my dear Friend—a stranger in London, perhaps, and a total stranger to this Tabernacle, yet I believe you are brought here that my Lord and Master may see you—*you,* "a man, named Matthew," or "John," or "James," or "Thomas," or whatever your name may be. And oh, I pray that this may be the time when you shall see Him and hear Him say, "Follow Me," and you shall feel a blessed urge to follow Him without question, or hesitancy, but at once leave whatever your sinful life may have been and become a follower of Christ!

So, in the first place, this call of Matthew seemed accidental and unlikely, yet it was according to the purpose of God and, therefore, it was duly given and answered.

II. In the second place, THIS CALL OF THE MAN NAMED MATTHEW WAS ALTOGETHER UNTHOUGHT-OF AND UNSOUGHT.

Matthew was not engaged in prayer when Christ called him. *He was in a degrading business*—"sitting at the receipt of custom." He was not listening to the Savior's preaching—he was taking from the people, against their will, the taxes for their Roman conqueror. As far as I can see, he had not even *thought* about Christ. I do not believe that he had been called, before, to be a disciple of Christ—and that he was, on this occasion, called to be an *Apostle*—for I cannot imagine one who had been saved by Christ returning to the publican business. It was an extortioner's occupation all through, and he who is called to be Christ's follower does not practice extortion from his fellow men! If that is his employment before his conversion, he quits it when he comes to Christ.

Matthew was, further, *in an ensnaring business*. Nothing is more likely to hold a man fast then the love of gain. Sticky stuff is that gold and silver of which many are so fond—it has bird-limed many a soul for the best fowler, the devil—and many have been destroyed by it. The publicans usually made a personal profit by extorting more than was due and, at this time, Matthew was not paying away money, but, "sitting at the receipt of custom."

I do not know that *even if Matthew had wished to follow Christ, he would have dared to do so*. He must have thought that he was too unworthy to follow Christ and if he had dared to attempt it, I should suppose that *he would have been repulsed by the other Apostles*. They would have snubbed him and asked, "Who are you, to come among us?" They dared not do so after Christ, Himself, had said to Matthew, "Follow Me," but certainly there is no indication that this man named Matthew was seeking Christ, or even thinking about Him! Yet, while he sat taking his tolls and customs, Jesus came to him and said, "Follow Me."

O my dear Hearer, if you have been converted, it may be that something like this was true in your case! At any rate, this I know is true—you were not the first to seek Christ, but Christ was the first to seek you. You were a wandering sheep and did not love the fold, but His sweet mercy went out after you. His Grace made you thoughtful and led you to pray. The Holy Spirit breathed in you, your first breath of spiritual life, and so you came to Christ. It was so, I am sure—you did not first seek Christ, but He first sought you! Let us who are saved now present the prayer to God, that many here who have never sought the Lord may nevertheless find Him, for it is written, "I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, to a nation that was not called by My name." See, then, the freeness of the Grace of God, the sovereignty of His choice! Admire it in the man named Matthew. Admire it still more in yourself, whatever your name may be!

III. Thirdly, THIS CALL OF MATTHEW WAS GIVEN BY THE LORD JESUS WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM.

It is not said that Matthew first saw the Lord, but, "as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew." I like to dwell upon those words, "He saw a man named Matthew," because they seem to me to have a great deal of instruction in them. Christ probably stopped opposite where Matthew was sitting and, looking at him, *He saw all the sin that had been in him and all the evil that still remained in him*. "He *saw* a man named Matthew." Christ has a searching look, a discerning look, a detecting look. He looked Matthew up and down and He saw all that was in him. All that was secret to others was manifest before His piercing eyes. "He saw a man named Matthew," and I believe that Jesus saw more in Matthew than was really in Matthew. I mean, that His love *looked goodness* into Matthew, and then saw it! His love looked Grace into Matthew and then saw it.

I do not know, but as far as I can see, Matthew had always been called, "Levi," before. The Lord Jesus Christ did not see "a man named Levi." That was his old name, but, *He saw Matthew as he was to be.* "He saw a man named Matthew." O Beloved, when the Lord looked upon you, even while you were a sinner, He saw a saint in you! Though it was only His own eyes that could see so much as that, what He meant to make of you, He already saw in you and He loved you as one who should yet be one of His redeemed servants!

I believe, also, that when the Lord Jesus Christ saw Matthew with the pen in his hand, He said to Himself, "See what a nimble pen he has—*he*

is the man to write the first of the four Gospels." Jesus saw Matthew figuring away, as he put down the people's names and how much they paid, and He said to Himself, "That is the man to write one of the most regular and orderly of the Gospels. There is a clerkly habit about this man. He is a good account keeper—he is the man for My service."

I do not know, dear Friend, what the Lord may happen to see in you. I do not know all that He saw when He looked upon me—I fear that He saw nothing in me but sin, evil and vanity—but I believe that He said to Himself concerning me, "I see one to whom I can teach My Truth and who, when he gets a hold of it, will grip it fast and never let it go. And one who will not be afraid to speak it wherever he is." So the Lord saw what use He could make of me and I wonder what use He can make of you? Sit still, dear child of God, and wonder that the Lord should have made such use of you as He has made! And you who are just beginning to think of the Lord Jesus Christ, sit still, and each one of you say, "I wonder what use He can make of me!"

There is an adaptation in men, even while they are unconverted, which God has put into them for their future service. Luke, you know, was qualified to write his Gospel because he had been a physician. And Matthew was qualified to write the particular Gospel which he has left us because he had been a publican. There may be a something about your habits of life and about your constitution and your condition that will qualify you for some special niche in the Church of God in years to come. Oh, happy day when Jesus shall look upon you and call you to follow Him! Happy day when He *did* look upon some of us and saw in us what His love *meant* to put there—that He might make of us vessels of mercy meet for the Master's use!

IV. Pressing on a little further, I want you to notice, in the fourth place, that MATTHEW'S CALL WAS GRACIOUSLY CONDESCENDING—"As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me."

Christ had the choice of His followers, so *how came He to choose a publican?* The Roman yoke was so detestable to the free-born son of Abraham that he could not bear the fact that the Roman, the idolater, should be lord in the Holy Land. So, if the Romans wanted Jews to collect the taxes, they could only get persons who had lost all care about public reputation! They might be no worse than other people—perhaps they were not—but they were esteemed as being the very off-scouring and pariahs of their race. But the Lord Jesus Christ sees this publican and says to him, "Follow Me." Not much of a credit will he be to his Master, so, at least those around him will say. "Look how this Man, Jesus Christ, goes about and picks up the scum of the people, the residue! He is taking a *publican* as His follower—the man who has given himself up to be the servant of the oppressors and who has been, himself, an oppressor! He is going to have *him*. Now, if the Nazarene had passed by and seen a learned Rabbi, or a Pharisee with his phylacteries—one who had made broad the borders of his garment—if Jesus had called *him*, it would have given a respectability to the community."

Yes, but it so happens that the Lord Jesus Christ does not care about that sort of respectability at all! He is so respectable, Himself, in the highest sense of being respected, that He has honor enough and to spare for all His people! And He can condescend, without hazard, to call into His immediate company, to be one of His personal followers, "a man named Matthew," even though he is a collector of the Roman taxes!

"Oh!" says one, "but I cannot think that He will ever call *me*." Yes, but I can think that He will! You remember John Newton, who had been a slave dealer and more—who had been himself a slave, literally a slave—as well as a slave to the worst passions? Yet, let the church of St. Mary Woolnoth tell how from its pulpit there sounded through long years the glorious Gospel of the blessed God from one who had been an African blasphemer, but who became a minister of Christ of the highest and noblest kind! Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ loves to look out for the *publicani*, the very lowest of the low, and to say to them, "Follow Me. Come into My company. Walk behind Me. Become My servant. Be entrusted with My Gospel. I will make use of you." He still takes such as these to become the proclaimers of His Word! Oh, that He may thus call some of you!

"Well," you say, "it *was* great condescension when the Lord called Matthew, the publican." Yes, but was it not equal condescension when He called you and me? O man or woman, whatever your name, sit and wonder, and adore the condescending love that chose even *you* to be Christ's follower!

V. Again, dear Friends—I hope I do not weary you while I try to bring this case of Matthew fully before you, wishing always that you may see yourself in it—observe next that THIS CALL OF MATTHEW WAS SUBLIMELY SIMPLE. Here it is in a nutshell—"*He* said."

It was not John who said it, or James, or any of the Apostles, but, "*He* said." And it is not my preaching, or your preaching, or an archbishop's preaching that can save souls—it is, "*He* said"—and it is when the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Divine Spirit, says to a man, "*Follow Me*," that then the decisive work is done! Did He not say to the primeval darkness, "Light be!" and light was? And God, the Omnipotent and Eternal, has but to speak to man and a like result will follow. "He said to him, Follow Me," and then *immediately*, just as simply as possible, the record says, "*he arose and followed Him."* There is no flattery, no priest-craft, no sacramentarianism. "He said, Follow Me and he arose and followed Him." That is the way of salvation! Christ bids you, while you are in your sin, leave it, and you leave it. He bids you trust Him and you *do* trust Him and, trusting Him, you are saved, for, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life."

Is that how you were saved, dear Friend? I know it is! Yet you used to fuss and fret and fume and say to yourself, "I need to *feel*. I need to *see*. I need to *experience*." Now I hope that you have gotten clear of all those mistakes! There is nothing more sublime than your conversion, but there is nothing more simple! And as for you, dear Friends, who are looking for signs and wonders, or else you will not believe, I wish you would give up that foolish notion, for there is no sign and no wonder which is equal to

this, that Christ should say to the *dead heart*, "Live," and it lives! That He should say to the *unbelieving* heart, "Believe," and it believes! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I say to you, Sinner, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" And if He is really speaking by me, you *will* believe in Him and you will arise and follow Him!

So, Matthew's call to follow Christ was sublimely simple.

VI. Notice, also, that IT WAS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTUAL. The Lord Jesus Christ said to him, "Follow Me," and "he arose and followed Him."

Matthew followed at once. Some might have waited and put the coins away, but it does not appear that Matthew did so—"he arose and followed Him." He did not say to Christ, "I must enter the amounts to the end of this page. Here are a lot of people with fish baskets, I must see how much I can get out of them and so finish up my reckoning." No, "he arose and followed Him." I believe that when a man is converted, he is converted outright, and he will come right out from whatever wrong thing he has been doing. I have heard of a publican (I mean the other sort of publican, not a tax-gatherer) who was very fond of drink and he had, by means of the drink, sent many to Hell. But, the day he was converted, he smashed his signboard and had done with the evil traffic forever! When there is anything else that is wrong, whatever it is, I like to see men smash it up and have done with it! Clear every trace of it out of your house—do not try to keep even a little piece of it, or to do a wrong thing and say, "I will give the profits to the Lord Jesus Christ." He will not take the money that is stained with the blood of souls! Quit the evil trade and have done with it. Every kind of sin and every sort of evil, whatever it may be, will be left as soon as Effectual Grace comes to a man! I do not believe that anyone ever repents a little bit at a time—it is once and for all that he does it—he turns straight around immediately and obeys the Lord's call, "Follow Me." Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow Me." "And he arose and followed Him."

"Oh!" says one, "was it so?" Yes, it was. I am not talking about things that are matters of question, I am speaking about *facts*. "As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him." I know another man, not named, "Matthew," but "Charles," and the Lord said to him, "Follow Me." And he also arose and followed Him. If I were to ask all the Christian men now here—John, James, Samuel or whatever their names—who heard Jesus Christ say, "Follow Me," and who followed Him. If I were to ask them to stand up, I hope there would not be many of you left sitting! And you godly women, too, know that it was just the call of the Lord Jesus Christ to you that brought you to Him, then and there!

The call to Matthew was the call of Effectual Grace. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," and Jesus Christ spoke to Matthew the word of *the* King. He said, "Follow Me," and Matthew did follow Him! I have heard that when the Queen sends for anybody to come and see her, she does not "request the pleasure of his company," but she sends her command to him to come. That is the way kings and queens talk—and that is just

the way with the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. He says, "Follow Me." And preaching to you *in His name*, we do not say, "Dear Friend, do be converted, if you will," but we say, "Thus says the Lord! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"—and with that command goes the power of the Word of *the* King, and so sinners are saved. Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him."

VII. Now, lastly, MATTHEW'S CALL WAS A DOOR OF HOPE FOR OTHER SINNERS.

I have been speaking mostly about personal conversion and perhaps somebody says, "You know, Sir, we are to think about other people as well as ourselves." Precisely so! And there is never a man who is saved who wants to go to Heaven *alone*. So, when the Lord Jesus Christ saw "a man, named Matthew" and bade the publican follow Him, *his salvation encouraged other publicans to come to Jesus*. Christ saw a great many other publicans and sinners whom he intended to draw to Himself by means of that "man, named Matthew." He was to become a decoy for a great multitude of others like himself!

Next, *his open house gave opportunity to his friends to hear Jesus.* No sooner was Matthew called and led to follow the Lord Jesus, than he said to himself, "Now, what can I do for my new Master? I have a good big room where I have been accustomed to lock up the people's goods till they have paid their dues—the *douane*, the custom house where I put away their goods in bond. Here, John, Thomas, Mary—come and clean out this room! Put a long table right down the middle. I am going to have in all my old friends—they have known what kind of man I have been. I am going to invite them all to supper and it will not be a lean supper, either, it shall be the best supper they have ever had." Levi made a great feast in his own house and he said to the Lord Jesus, "You have bid me follow You and I am trying to do so. And one way in which I am following You is that I am going to have a great feast in my house, tonight, to fetch in all my old companions. Will You, my Lord, be so good as to come and sit at the head of the table and talk with them? They will be in a better humor for listening after I have fed them well. Will You come and when they are all happy around my table, will You do for them what You have done for me? Perhaps, Lord, if You will say that Matthew has become Your follower, they will say, 'What? Matthew? Does *he* follow Christ? Well, then, who must this Christ be that He will have such a follower as Matthew? Surely, He will have us, too, for we are like Matthew—and we will come to Him as Matthew has come to Him, if He will but speak the Word of Power to us as He did to Matthew.'" So the call of Matthew was Christ's way of bringing numbers of lost ones to a knowledge of the Truth of God and to eternal salvation!

Now, has it been so with you, dear Friend? Man, named John, Thomas, Samuel—woman, named Mary, Jane, or whatever it may be—have *you* brought any others to Jesus? Have you brought your children to Jesus? Have your prayers brought your husband to Jesus? Have your entreaties brought your brethren to Jesus? If not, you have failed as yet in

accomplishing that which should be your life-work. Ask the Lord to help you, now, to begin with somebody or other of your own circle and your own standing, to whom you will be most likely to speak with the largest measure of influence and power of any man. The day you are converted, try to talk with those who were your schoolmates. Were you converted in a factory? Do not hesitate to speak to your fellow workmen. Are you a person of position? Do you occupy a high station in the fashionable world? Do not be ashamed of your Master, but introduce Christ into the drawing room and let Him have a footing among the highest of the land! Let each man, according to his calling, feel, "He who bade me follow Him, has bid me do so that others may, through my instrumentality, be led to follow Him, too." God bless you in this holy service!

I feel as if I must close my discourse by saying that as the Lord saw "a man named Matthew," and as He saw you, try now to return that look of love and see Him! Consider how great this Man was and, as Christ came to Matthew's table, I now invite you who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to come to His Table. And though you are not now numbered with publicans and sinners, but with His redeemed people, still it shall be your great joy to wonder, as you sit here, that your Master does still condescend to eat with publicans and sinners!

God bless you and save the whole of this great company, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:1-13.

Verses 1, 2. *And He* (that is, Jesus) *entered into a boat and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed.* "Behold," for it is something worth looking at! Wherever this word, "Behold," is put in Scripture, it calls for deep and earnest attention. There is nothing amazing in the sight of a man sick of the palsy, for there have been many such. But there *is* something amazing in his friends having faith enough in Christ to bring the palsied man to the Savior! "Behold" this, that you may imitate it and bring your friends, palsied with sin, and lay them down at the feet of Jesus! "Behold" it till you feel that you must copy it. "Behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed."

2. *And Jesus, seeing their faith*—Our Lord Jesus has a very quick eye. If there is faith *anywhere*, He can see it. He can even see faith in you when you cannot see any in yourself! When unbelief covers up the faith you have, He can see it—"Jesus, seeing their faith"—

2. *Said to the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.* Probably this was not the blessing that the man was first seeking, but it is our Lord's custom to lay the axe at the root of the tree of evil—and He did so here. Sin was in the man's heart. It is sin that lies at the bottom of all sorrow and if the sin is but taken away, we need not mind if we do not lose the palsy. If sin is forgiven, we may be content to keep our bed. The Savior often gives gold to those who only ask for sil-

ver—he grants the forgiveness of *sin* to those who only seek relief from sickness. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," so He said to this palsied man, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

3. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemes.* They did not dare to say it out loud—it was whispered in the chamber of their souls. But the Lord heard it and He can hear your *thoughts*, my Friend, though you would not dare to put them into words! He knows all that you are thinking, just as He read the thoughts of these murmuring scribes.

4, 5. *And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk?* Why, of course, it is much easier to *say*, "Your sins are forgiven you"! There are thousands of so-called "priests" who say that, but who is to know whether sins are forgiven or not? But if a man shall say, "Arise, and walk"—that is a thing that we can easily put to the test. You can see whether the man does arise and walk, so that, of the two, the command to arise and walk would seem to be the more difficult. And if these scribes had asked Christ—as they had tacitly done—to make this man arise and walk, if he had not done that, but had done a lesser thing, why should they say that He *blasphemed*?

6, 7. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then He said to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed and go to your house. And he arose and departed to his house.* Now, since there was power in this Word of Christ for the healing of the sick, the onlookers might well conclude that there was also power in the Word of Christ for the forgiveness of sin. If it was no blasphemy on His part to bid the man arise, and walk, for God seconded the command and the miracle was worked, it could be no blasphemy for that same Divine Person to say to the palsied man, "Your sins are forgiven you."

8. *But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled*—The scribes quibbled, but the multitudes marveled! And they did more—

8. *And glorified God, which had given such power to men.* They did not yet perceive that Christ was more than Man, but they went as far as they could see and they blessed God that a Man had been raised up who had such power over sickness and sin.

9. *And as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.* Matthew was at the toll-booth, perhaps, taking money for fish caught in the Sea of Galilee—whatever the "custom" was, he was receiving from the people the usual tax on behalf of the Roman government.

9. *And He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* This was a very amazing thing and it is recorded as an instance of Divine Power equal to that which was seen when Jesus bade the palsied man take up his bed and walk!

10. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.* Whose house? Matthew's house! Then why did not Matthew say so?

Because he did not like to say anything in his own praise. Luke says that Matthew made Christ "a great feast in his own house," but Matthew himself simply puts it, "As Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came." I want you to notice this further, "Behold." "*Behold*, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy." Now again, "*Behold*, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples." It is worth your noticing, it is worth your thinking upon, for, it may be that you feel yourself to be guilty and unworthy to come to Christ—unfit to be in communion with Him. If so, listen—"*Behold*, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples." Jesus loves to feast the famished! And if they come where He is, seeking food, He will give them Himself, the Bread of Life, to eat, and the Water of Life to drink!

11. *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?* Oh, these wretched Pharisees! These men with the green eyes who cannot see anything but they must be jealous of it and find fault with it, are not all dead! Possibly there are some of them in our midst just now, for they are usually in every congregation where the Gospel is preached. You may know them by their sanctimonious appearance and their sneering countenance, as they look down on the common people and the sinful people—the publicans and sinners by whom they are surrounded.

12. *But when Jesus heard that, he said to them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.* I do not find that the disciples answered these Pharisees, but Jesus replied for them. Very often the best thing to do with quibblers is to leave them to the Master—you might make a muddle of answering them—so turn them over to your Lord. "He said to them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." "You supremely good people—in your own esteem—do not need Me. Why should I come and eat bread with Pharisees? But these publicans whom you despise—these sinners whom you loathe, are spiritually sick, and ought not I, the Good Physician, to be found among them?"

13. *But go you and learn what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not chosen to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* It must have galled these Pharisees to be sent to learn anything, for they thought they knew everything that could be known!

May the Lord Jesus come into this assembly and find those people who most need a blessing, for to them He will freely give it!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—231, 660.

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

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF A WOUNDED SPIRIT
NO. 2494

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 6, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 16, 1885.

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?"
Proverbs 18:14.

EVERY man, sooner or later, has some kind of infirmity to bear. It may be that his constitution from the very first will be inclined to certain disease and pains, or possibly he may, in passing through life, suffer from accident or decline of health. He may not, however, have any infirmity of the body—he may enjoy the great blessing of health, but he may have what is even worse—an infirmity of mind. There will be something about each man's infirmity which he would alter if he could, or, if he should not have *any* infirmity of body or of mind, he will have a cross to carry of some kind—in his relatives, in his business, or in certain of his circumstances. His world is not the Garden of Eden and you cannot make it to be so! It *is* like that garden in *this* respect—that the serpent is in it—and the trail of the serpent is over everything here. It is said that there is a skeleton in some closet or other of everybody's house. I will not say so much as that, but I am persuaded that there is no man in this world but has trial in some form or other, unless God permits them to have their portion in this life because they will have no portion of bliss in the life that is to come! There are some such people who appear be have no afflictions and trials, but as the Apostle reminds us, "If you are without chastisement, of which all (the true seed of the Lord) are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons." And none of us would wish to have that terrible name truthfully applied to us! I should greatly prefer to come into the condition of the Apostle when he said, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may great upon me."

I say again that every man will have to bear an infirmity of some sort or other. To bear that infirmity is not difficult when the spirit is sound and strong—"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity."

I. Let me, therefore, first of all, try to answer the question—WHAT IS THAT SOUND SPIRIT WHICH WILL SUSTAIN A MAN'S INFIRMITIES?

Such a spirit may be found, in a minor degree, in merely natural men. Among the Stoics there were men who bore pain and poverty and reproach without evincing the slightest feeling. Among the Romans, in their

heroic days, there was one named Scoevola who thrust his right hand into a fire and suffered it to be burned off in order to let the foreign tyrant know that there were Romans who did not care about pain. We have read amazing stories of the patience and stern endurance of even natural men, for our text is true in that sense, "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity." Whatever it was that was placed upon some men, they seemed as if they carried it without a care or without a thought, so brave was their heart within them. Yet, if we knew more of these people, we would find that there were some points in which their natural strength failed them, for it must be so—the creature at its best estate is altogether vanity! David truly said, "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God." And the strength of mind by which Christian men are able to bear their infirmities is of a higher kind than that which comes from either stoicism, from natural sternness or from obedience to any of the precepts of human philosophy.

The spirit which will best bear infirmities is, first of all, *a gracious spirit worked in us by the Spirit of God.* If you would bear your trouble without complaining. If you would sustain your burden without fainting. If you would mount on wings as eagles. If you would run without weariness and walk without fainting, you must have the Life of God within you—you must be born again! You must be in living union with Him who is the Strong One and who, by the life which He implants within you, can give you of *His* own strength. I do not believe that anything but that which is Divine will stand the wear and tear of this world's temptations and of this world's trials and troubles—

"Mere mortal power shall fade and die,
And youthful vigor cease,"

but they that trust in the Lord and derive their power from Him shall press forward even to victory! So then, first, if you would sustain your infirmity, you must have a gracious spirit, that is, a spirit renewed by Divine Grace.

Further, I think that a sound spirit which can sustain infirmity will be *a spirit cleansed in the precious blood of Christ.* "Conscience does make cowards of us all" and it is only when conscience is pacified by the application of the blood of sprinkling that we are able to sustain our infirmities. The restful child of God will say, "What does it matter if I am consumptive? What does it matter if I have a broken leg? My sin is forgiven me and I am on my way to Heaven—what does *anything else* matter? Have you not sometimes felt that if you had to spend the rest of your life in a dungeon and to live on bread and water, or to lie there, as John Bunyan would have said, till the moss grew on your eyelids, yet, as long as you were sure that you were cleansed from sin by the precious blood of Christ, you could bear it all? For, after all, what are any pains and sufferings that the whips and scourges of this mortal life can lay upon us—compared with the terrors that have to be endured when sin is discerned by an awakened conscience and the wrath of God lies heavily upon us?

Believe me when I say that I would rather suffer such physical pangs as may belong to Hell, itself, than I would endure the wrath of God in my spirit—for there is nothing that can touch the very marrow of our being

like a sense of Divine Anger when it comes upon the soul, when God seems to dip His arrows in the Lake of Fire and then shoot them at us till they wound the very apple of our eye and our whole being seems to be a mass of pain and misery! Oh, this is dreadful! But, once delivered from all fear of the righteous vengeance of God, I can sing with Dr. Watts—

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure!
Death has no sting beside.
The law gives sin its damning power
But Christ, my Ransom, died."

Take sin away and give me a spirit washed in the fountain filled with blood and I can patiently go through anything and everything, the Lord being my Helper.

The kind of spirit, then, that a man needs to sustain his infirmity, is one which has been renewed by the Holy Spirit and washed in the precious blood of Jesus.

Next, it is *a spirit which exercises itself daily to a growing confidence in God.* The spirit that is to sustain infirmity is not a spirit of doubt and fear and mistrust. There is no power about such a spirit as *that*—it is like a body without bone, or sinew, or muscle. Strength lies in *believing*. He who can trust can work. He who can trust can suffer. The spirit that can sustain a man in his infirmity is the spirit that can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Come what may, I will not doubt my God, for His Word is strong and steadfast. Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." O dear Sirs, I am sure that if God calls you to do business in great waters, you will need the great bow anchor with you—you will not feel safe without it! When the Lord calls you to battle with your spiritual foes, you will feel the necessity of having upon you the whole armor of God and, above all, you will need to take the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the enemy!

So, Beloved, our spirit must be a renewed spirit, a blood-washed spirit and a *believing* spirit if we are to sustain our infirmity.

I must also add my belief that no spirit can so well endure sickness, loss, trial or sorrow as *a perfectly-consecrated spirit*. The man who is free from all secondary motives, who lives only for God's Glory, says, if he is sick, "How can I glorify God upon my bed?" If he is in health, he cries, "How can I glorify God in my vigor?" If he is rich, he asks, "How can I glorify God with the possessions which He has put under my stewardship?" If he is poor, he says, "There must be some advantage about my poverty! How can I best use it to the Glory of God?" He looks to see, not how he can comfort himself, but how he can most successfully fight his Master's battles! A soldier who is in the fight must not enter into business on his own account. Paul wrote to Timothy, "No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier." And the true soldier of the Cross says, "Up hill and down dale, wet or dry, in honor or dishonor, all I have to do is to lift on high the banner of my Lord and strike down the foe. And, if necessary, even lay down my own life for His sake." The perfectly consecrated spirit will enable a man to sustain his infirmity, but a selfish spirit will weaken

him so that he will begin to complain of this and to lament that—and will not be made "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

So much, then, about the sound spirit that can sustain infirmity—may the Lord give it to every one of us! How many of us have it? "Oh," says one, "I think I am all right! I have a sane mind in a sane body." Ah, yes, but there is another part of you that needs sanity—you need *spiritual* health! And there are times that will come to you who have nothing to depend upon but your bodily and mental vigor, and then you will find you need something more. There will come a trial that will touch you in a very tender spot and you will cry out, "Oh, what is it that I need?" You will find that there was an unguarded place in your harness and the arrow of the adversary has pierced you to the soul. You must be born again even for the bearing of your present infirmity—even for struggling through this life you must have a new heart and a right spirit—or else sometime or other you will find yourself overthrown. "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?" What will you do, then, if you have not that Divinely-given spirit which will sustain your infirmity? When the death sweat is on your brow, you will need a bettor handkerchief than was ever made by human hands! And if the Lord your God is not at your side, then, to wipe the scalding tears from your eyes, what will you do? What will you do?

II. But now I have to answer a second question, WHAT IS A WOUNDED SPIRIT? "A wounded spirit, who can bear?" It cannot bear its own infirmity, so it becomes a load to itself and the question is not, "*What* can it bear?" but, "Who can bear *it*?" "A wounded spirit, who can bear?"

What, then, is a wounded spirit? Well, I have known some who have talked about having a wounded spirit, but the wound has been, after all, *a very slight affair compared with the wounds that I mean.* One has been disappointed in love. That is very sad, but still, it is a trial that can be endured. We have no right to love the creature so much as to make it our god or our idol. I have known some who have been disappointed in the object of their ambition and, in consequence, they have had a wounded spirit. But who are you that you should not be disappointed and what are you that you should have everything according to your own mind? Surely, if the Lord were to deal with you according to your sins, you would have something to bear far worse than your present disappointment! As to those trials of which a person says, "Nobody ever suffered as I have done—nobody was ever treated as I have been," such statements are altogether wrong! There are many others who have passed through equal or even greater trials. Do not, therefore, allow these things to fret you and to destroy your peace. Be not like the Spartan boy who put the fox in his bosom and carried it there, though it was gnawing at his flesh and eating right into his heart! There are some people who are so unwise as to make earthly objects their supreme delight and those objects become like foxes that gnaw to their soul's destruction!

I will only say this about such wounded hearts as these—there is a great deal of sin mingled with the sorrow—and a great deal of pride, a great deal of creature-worship and of idolatry! Depend upon it, if you make an idol, and God loves you, He will break it! A Quaker lady once stood up to speak in a little meeting and all that she said was, "Verily, I perceive that children are idols." She did not know why she said it, but there was a mother there who had been wearing black for years after her child had been taken away. She had never forgiven her God for what He had done. Now this is an evil that is to be rebuked! I dare not comfort those whose spirits are wounded in this fashion. If they carry their mourning too far, we must say to them, "Dear Friend, is not this rebellion against God? May not this be petulance instead of patience? May there not be very much here which is not at all according to the mind of Christ?" We may sorrow and be grieved when we lose our loved ones, for we are men—but we must moderate our sorrow and bow our will to the will of the Lord—for are we not also men of God?

I will not dwell further upon that point, but there are *some forms of a wounded spirit which are serious* and yet they are not quite what I am going after to speak about. Some have a wounded spirit through the cruelty of men, the unkindness of children, the ingratitude of those whom they have helped and for whom they have had such affection that they would almost have been willing to sacrifice their own lives. It is a terrible wounding when he who should have been your friend becomes your foe and when, like your Lord, you, also, have your Judas Iscariot. It is not easy to bear misrepresentation and falsehood, to have your purest motives misjudged and to be thought to be only seeking something for yourself when you have a pure desire for the good of others. This is a very painful kind of wounded spirit, but it must not be allowed to be carried too far. We should cry to God to help us bear this trial, for, after all, who are we that we should not be despised? Who are we that we should not be belied? He is the wise man who expects this kind of trial and, expecting it, is not disappointed when it comes!

"How"—asked one of a person who had lived through the terrible French Revolution when almost all notable men were put to death—"how was it that *you* escaped?" He answered, "I made myself of no reputation and nobody ever spoke of me, so I escaped." And I believe that, in this world, the happiest lot does not belong to those of us who are always being talked about, but to those who do not know anybody and whom nobody knows—they can steal through the world very quietly. So do not be broken-hearted if men try to wound your spirit!

When, 30 years ago, they abused me to the utmost, I felt that I need not care what they said, for I could hardly do anything worse than they said I had done! When you once get used to this kind of treatment—and you may as well do so, for you will have plenty of it if you follow Christ—it will not trouble you and you will be able to bear your infirmity without being much wounded by the unkindness of men.

There are others who have been very grievously wounded by sorrow. They have had affliction upon affliction, loss after loss, bereavement after

bereavement. And we ought to feel those things. Indeed, it is by feeling them that we get the good out of them. Still, every Christian man should cry to God for strength to bear repeated losses and bereavements if they are his portion. And he should endeavor, in the strength of God, not to succumb whatever his trials may be. If we yield to temptation and begin to complain of God for permitting such things to come upon us, we shall only be kicking against the pricks and so wound ourselves all the more! Let us be submissive to the hand that wields the rod of correction and then very soon that rod will be taken from off our backs. There are some who have been greatly wounded, no doubt, through sickness. A wounded spirit may be the result of diseases which seriously shake the nervous system. Let us be very tender with Brothers and Sisters who got into that condition. I have heard some say, rather unkindly, "Sister So-and-So is so nervous, we can hardly speak in her presence." Yes, but talking like that will not help her—there are many persons who have had this trying kind of nervousness greatly aggravated by the unkindness or thoughtlessness of friends. It is a *real* disease—it is not imaginary! Imagination, no doubt, contributes to it and increases it, but, still, there is a reality about it.

There are some forms of physical disorder in which a person lying in bed feels great pain through another person simply walking across the room. "Oh," you say, "that is *more* imagination!" Well, you may think so if you like, but if you are ever in that painful condition—as I have been many a time—I will guarantee that you will not talk in that fashion again. "But we cannot take notice of such fancies," says one. I suppose that you would like to run a steamroller across the room, just for the sake of strengthening their nerves! But if you had the spirit of Christ, you would want to walk across the room as though your feet were flakes of snow! You would not wish to cause the poor sufferer any additional pain. I beg you, never grieve those upon whom the hand of God is lying in the form of depression of spirit, but be very fond and gentle with them! You need not encourage them in their sadness, but, at the same time, let there be no roughness in dealing with them—they have many very sore places and the hand that touches them should be soft as down.

Yet I do not wish to speak only of that kind of wounded spirit, for that is rather the business of the physician than of the Divine. Still, it well illustrates this latter part of our text, "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" But this is the kind of wounded spirit I mean. *When a soul is under a deep and terrible sense of sin*—when conviction flashes into the mind with lightning swiftness and force—and the man says, "I am guilty." When the notion of what guilt is, first comes clearly home to him and he sees that God must be as certainly just as He is good—then he discovers that he has angered Infinite Love, that he has provoked Almighty Grace and that he has made his best Friend to be, necessarily, his most terrible Foe! A man in such a condition as that will have a wounded spirit such as none can bear! Then you may pipe to him, but he will not dance. You may try to charm him with your amusements, or to please him with your oratory, but you cannot give him peace or rest. "A wounded spirit, who

can bear?" You know that there was one of old who said, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." And there was another, Judas, who actually did strangle himself under an awful sense of his guilt in betraying his Lord. Oh, I trust that no one of you will act as he did, for that were to damn yourself irretrievably! But I do not wonder that you cry out, "Oh, that I could hide myself in the dust to escape from the terrors of a sense of Divine wrath!" "A wounded spirit, who can bear?"

Sometimes the spirit is wounded *by the fierce temptations of Satan*. I hope that you do not all understand what this means, but there are some who do. Satan tempts them to doubt, tempts them to sin, tempts them to blaspheme. Some dear friends whom I know, who are among the purest-minded of mortals and whose lives are models of everything that is devout and right, are worried by the great adversary from morning to night, scarcely ever waking in the night without some vile suggestion of Satan or some horrible howling in their ears—"You are lost! You are lost! You are shut out from mercy forever." They are tempted even to curse God and die—and that temptation brings a wounded spirit such as they scarcely know how to bear! Who can bear it? God save you from it, if you have fallen under its terrible power!

A wounded spirit may also come through *desertion by God*. The Believer has not walked carefully. He has fallen into sin and God has hidden His face from him. Ah, my Friends, whenever you trifle with sin, I wish you could feel as some of God's true people have done when they have been restored after a great fall! A burned child dreads the fire and so does a true child of God who has ever played with sin—he has been brought back to his Lord, but he has gone the rest of his life with an aching heart and limping limbs and, many a time in wintry weather he has felt that his broken bones start and cry out against him with the memory of his past sins! "Deliver me," says David, "from the sins of my youth!" And so may some of God's best servants say in their old age. And some who once were very bright stars, but who have been, for a while, eclipsed, will never be able to escape from a certain sense of darkness which is still upon them. "I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul," may he say who has once grievously sinned against God after light and knowledge. Therefore, Beloved, be very careful that you do not backslide, for if you do, you will have a wounded spirit which you will not know how to bear.

I believe, however, that some of God's children have *a wounded spirit entirely through mistake*. I am always afraid of those who get certain wild notions into their heads—ideas that are not true, I mean. They are very happy while they hold those high notions and they look down with contempt upon others of God's people who do not go kite-flying or balloon-sailing as they do. I think to myself, sometimes—how will they come down when their precious balloon bursts? I have often wished them well down on the level again. I have seen them believe this and believe that which they were not warranted by the Scriptures to believe—and they have affected exalted ideas of their own attainments. Their position was something amazing—they were far up in the sky looking down upon all

the saints below! Yes, dear Friends, that is all very pretty and very fine, undoubtedly. But *when you come down again*, then you will begin to condemn yourself for things that you need not condemn—and you will be distressed and miserable in your spirit because of a disappointment which you need never have had if you had walked humbly with your God.

For my own part, I can truly say that none of the novelties of this present evil age have any sort of charm for me. I am still content to abide in the old way, myself always a poor, needy, helpless sinner, finding everything I need in Christ. If you ever hear me beginning to talk about what a fine fellow I am, and how perfect I am getting, you just say, "He's off his head." Please put me in an asylum immediately, for I must have lost my reason before I could have believed this modern nonsense! I feel sure that I, for one, shall not suffer any disappointment in this direction, for I shall keep just where Jack the huckster kept and say with him—

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

Yet I am very fearful for others, for whom there awaits a terrible time of bondage when they once come back to the place where it would have been better for them to have stayed. If I were to set up to be a prince of the realm and begin to spend at the rate of fifty thousand pounds a year, I am afraid that, in a very few days, I would have the sheriff's officer down upon me—and I should not be able to pay a penny in the pound of my debts! I think I would much rather go on in my own quiet way and keep within my own means, than do anything of that kind. There are, nowadays, many spiritual spendthrifts who are pretending to spend money that does not exist—but they will very soon find a sense of their poverty forced upon them—and their need will come like an armed man demanding their surrender!

So much, then, upon the words, "a wounded spirit, who can bear?"

III. My time has almost fled, but I need to answer a third question—HOW ARE WE TO AVOID A WOUNDED SPIRIT SO FAR AS IT IS EVIL?

I answer, first, if you are happy in the Lord and full of joy and confidence, avoid a wounded spirit by *never offending your conscience*. Labor with all your might to be true to the light that God has given you, to be true to your understanding of God's Word and to follow the Lord with all your heart. When Mr. Bunyan describes Christian as meeting with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation and fighting that terrible battle which he so graphically describes, he told us that the pilgrim remembered, then, some of the slips that he had made when he was going down into the valley. While he was fighting with Apollyon, he was remembering in his own heart the slips that he had previously made. Nothing will come to you so sharply, in a time of sorrow, pain and brokenness of spirit, as a sense of sins of omission or sins of commission. When the Light of God's Presence is gone from you, you will sadly begin to say, "Why did I do this? Why did I not do that?" Therefore, dear Friends, endeavor as much as lies in you, to live in the time of your joy that if there ever should come times of depression, you may not have to remember neglected duties or willful wickedness!

Again, if you would avoid a wounded spirit, *get a clear view of the Gospel*. There are numbers of Christian people who have seen the Gospel just as that half-opened eye of the blind man saw "men as trees walking." They do not yet know the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. They do not know how a Christian stands in Christ. Get them to spell that glorious word, Grace, if they can! Ask them to say it like this—"*Free* Grace." They will probably say to you, "Oh *Free* Grace—that is tautology!" Never mind—give it to them, tautology or not! Spell it in your own soul—Free, Rich, Sovereign Grace, and know that you, a guilty, lost sinner, are saved as a sinner, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that in due time He died for the ungodly and that your standing is not in yourself or in your own attainments, but wholly and entirely in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! It will often prevent your getting a wounded spirit if you understand the differences between things that really differ and do not mix them up as so many do.

Again, you will avoid a wounded spirit *by living very near to God*. The sheep that gets bitten by the wolf is the one that does not stay near the shepherd. Ah, and I have known sheep to get bitten by the *dog*—and the dog did not mean them any hurt though he bit them! It has often happened that when I have been preaching, there has been somebody dreadfully hurt. Yes, even the Good Shepherd's dog bites, sometimes, but if you had kept near the Shepherd, His dog would not have bitten you, for neither the dog nor the wolf will bite those that are near Him. Let your cry be—

"Oh, for a closer walk with God!"

Then will come "a calm and heavenly frame." But if you get away from holy living and close communion with God, you may *expect* to get a wounded spirit.

So much, then, for the prevention which is better then a cure! God help us all to make good use of it!

IV. But, lastly, suppose our spirit is wounded, HOW IS IT TO BE HEALED?

Do you need that I should tell you that *there is only One who can heal a wounded spirit?* "By His stripes we are healed." If you would be healed of the bleeding wounds of your heart, flee to Christ! You did once—do it again! Come to Christ, now, though you may have come to Him a hundred times before! Come now, just as you are, without one plea, but that His blood was shed for you. Come to Him! There is no peace for a soul that does not do this—and you will have peace if you will but come simply as you are and trust yourself with Christ.

If, however, your wounded Spirit should not get peace at once, *try to remove any mistakes which may be causing you unnecessary sorrow*. Study your Bible more! Listen to plain preaching of the Gospel. Let this be to you the mark of true Gospel preaching—where Christ is everything and the creature is nothing—where it is salvation all of Grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit applying to the soul the precious blood of Jesus! Try to get a clear view of the Gospel and many a doubt and fear will fly away when knowledge takes the place of ignorance.

Endeavor, also, to *get a clear view of your own troubles.* We are never frightened so much by what we know as by what we do *not* know. The boy thinks, as he sees something white, "That is a ghost," and that is why he is frightened. He does not know what a ghost is—he supposes that it is something mysterious and he is superstitious—so he is frightened by the object before him. If he would go right up to it, he would see that it is a cow, and he would not be frightened any more. Half the fears in the world have no real grounds and if we could but induce troubled persons dispassionately to look at their fears, their fears would vanish! Write them down in black and white if you can, and let some friend read them. Perhaps, if you read them yourself, you will laugh at them. I believe that, oftentimes, with regard to the most grievous afflictions that we have in our mind, if they fretted somebody else, we should say, "I cannot think how that person can be so stupid." We almost know that we are, ourselves, stupid, but we do not like to confess it! I would therefore urge the wounded spirit to look at its wound—it is of no use to cover it over and say, "Oh, it is an awful wound!" Perhaps if you would just have it thoroughly examined, the surgeon would say to you, "Oh, it is only a flesh wound. It will soon be all right again!" And so, your drooping spirits would revive and your wounded self would begin to heal.

One thing, however, I would say to one who has a really wounded heart. *Remember Christ's sympathy with you.* O you who are tossed with tempest and not comforted, your Lord's vessel is in the storm with you! Yes, He is in the vessel with you! There is not a pang that rends the Believer's heart but He has felt it first. He drinks out of the cup with you. Is it very bitter? He has had a cup full of it for every drop that you taste! This ought to comfort you. I know of no better remedy for the heart's trouble in a Christian than to feel, "My Master, Himself, takes no better portion than that which He gives to me."

Also let me recommend, as a choice remedy for a wounded spirit, *an enlarged view of the love of God.* I wish that some of you who have a wounded spirit would give God credit for being as kind as you are, yourself. You would not suffer your child to endure a needless pain if you could remove it—neither does God willingly afflict, or grieve the children of men. He would not allow you to be cast down, but would cheer and comfort you if it were good for you. His delight is that you should be happy and joyful. Do not think that you may *not* take the comfort which He has set before you in His Word—He has put it there on purpose for you! Dare to take it and think well of God and it shall be well with your soul.

If this should not cure the evil, *remember the great brevity of all your afflictions, after all.* What if you should be a child of God who has even to go to bed in the dark? You will wake up in the eternal daylight! What if, for the time being, you are in heaviness? There is a necessity that you should be in heaviness through manifold temptation, but you will come out of it. You are not the first child of God who has been depressed or troubled. Yes, among the noblest men and women who ever lived, there has been much of this kind of thing. I noticed in the life of Sir Isaac New-

ton—probably the greatest mind that God ever made apart from His own dear Son—the great Sir Isaac Newton, the master and teacher of the truest philosophy, during the middle part of his life was in great distress and deep depression! Robert Boyle, whose name is well known to those who read works of depth of thought, at one time said that he counted life to be a very heavy burden to him. And there was that sweet, charming spirit of the poet, Cowper. You all know that throughout his life, he was like a flower that blooms in the shade, yet he exhaled the sweetest perfume of holy piety and poetry.

Do not, therefore, think that you are quite alone in your sorrow. Bow your head and bear it, if it cannot be removed, for but in a little while every cloud shall be swept away, and you, in the cloudless sunlight, shall behold your God! Meanwhile, His strength is sufficient for you. He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear! And if you cannot bear your infirmity because of your wounded spirit, He will bear for you, both yourself and your infirmity! "O rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." "Let not your heart be troubled. you believe in God, believe, also, in your Christ." Go away, you Hannah of a sorrowful spirit, and be no more sad! The Lord grant His comforts to you, for His Son, Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:30-40.

Verses 30-32. *And they departed from there and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said to them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying and were afraid to ask Him.* Here is the ruling passion of Christ which was always prominent throughout His life. Though He has just won a glorious victory over Satan, He does not stay to congratulate Himself upon it, but His heart is still away to the Cross where He is to suffer. He is thinking of His dying for His people, and longing until He shall have paid the ransom price for their redemption and set them free. Oh, the heights and depths of the love of Christ! See how steadfastly He sets His face to go to Jerusalem where He must die. Let us imitate Him—let us think as much of His passion, now that it is over, as He thought of it before it was come.

33-34, *And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that you argued among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had argued among themselves who should be the greatest.* It was a dreadful descent from communing with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration to meeting the furious demon at the foot of the hill—but this looks like a far greater descent—from the self-sacrifice of the Divine Master to the petty jealousies and self-seeking of His chosen servants! Oh, sometimes it makes our hearts sick when we have been almost lost in rapturous meditation, when we have been taken up well-near to Heaven in communion with the

Lord—and then we have had to attend to some paltry squabble between two Brothers or two Sisters! It does seem such a terrible come-down, yet our Lord and Master does not disdain thus to come down, for in tenderness He deals with these diseases of the sheep like a good shepherd.

35-37. *And He sat down and called the twelve, and said to them, If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And He took a child and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, Whoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receives Me: and whoever shall receive Me, receives not Me, but Him that sent Me.* Perhaps they were jealous of Peter. Possibly they were even more jealous of James and John. So the Lord gently pacifies them. He does not impatiently say, "I cannot enter into your disputes, I cannot be worried with you." Oh, no! But He sits down and talks with them. I like that picture—it is almost as grand as the group of Christ and His disciples at the supper table in the upper room. "He sat down and called the twelve, and said to them, If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." That is the way they come to be first, by being willing to be *last* and the servant of all! This is the *only* way to get to the front of Christ's army—he who would be chief, must always be aiming at the rear rank, willing to do the most humble service and to be the lowest menial in his Master's service. Only in this way can we rise. In Christ's Kingdom, the way to go up is to go down. Sink self and you shall surely rise.

38. *And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name, and he follows not us: and we forbade him, because he follows not us.* He did it, I daresay, in love to his Master, but not in the love *of* his Master. He did it, no doubt, with the desire to honor his Master, but he did not honor his Master by what he did.

39, 40. *But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our side.* Thus the Master had to talk to His poor disciples after having conversed with Moses and Elijah. Again I say, what a come-down it was from fellowship with the great Law-Giver of Israel and with the mighty Prophet of fire, to talk with these childish men who had fallen out among themselves and fallen out with other people! O blessed Master, we may gladly hope that You will commune with us as You did with them! We may also trust that some poor sinner, even though the devil may be in him, may catch Your eyes of pity and love—and that You may heal him.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—678, 617, 634.

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A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 13, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1885.

"Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touches any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, says the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean." Haggai 2:13, 14.

THE Prophet Haggai very wisely drew out from the priests a definite answer to certain questions which he put to them. Then, upon their authority, he could say to the people, "This is what your own priests say and this is what you, yourselves, believe." This was taking them by a kind of sacred guile and it was a powerful means of forcing home the Truth of God to their heart and conscience.

According to the 12th verse, Haggai first put to the priests this question, "If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any food, will it become holy? And the priests answered, and said, No." Here is a man who is holy—I mean, ceremonially holy—and he is carrying in the fold of his garments, part of a holy sacrifice. Now, if he touches anything, will he make it holy by that touch? The priests said, "No." They could not say otherwise. So, if a man is, himself, holy, however holy he may be, can he make another man holy simply by touching him? If he speaks of good things, or does good actions, will it be *certain* that he will, thereby, affect others by his good words and good works? Oh, no! There does not seem to be that spreading power in holy things that there is in unholy things! At any rate, not in those that are merely ceremonially holy. Here, then, is a man who is, in a legal sense, clean before God and he is carrying a holy thing in the fold of his garment, but he does not, therefore, make that which he touches to be clean or holy.

Then the Spirit of God, having by the mouth of the Prophet put the Truth of God in that way, suggested to him to ask the priests another question. "Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touches any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean." There is such a terrible contagion about uncleanness that he who is affected by it spreads it wherever he goes. Whatever he puts his foot upon, or touches with his hand, becomes thereby defiled. We cannot communicate holiness, but we can communicate unholiness! It will cause us labor and agony and anguish of spirit to impart to another even *one* right idea—and when it is imparted, it is not fully fixed in the hearer's heart till the Spirit of God comes and works a

miracle of Grace! But it is easy enough to communicate evil. A lewd song may have but one hearer and yet never be forgotten! A wrong action may never be chronicled by the public press, yet some little eye that saw it shall have learned from the evil example something that shall never be unlearned! The horribly contagious and infectious power of sin, wherever it is displayed, is terrible.

But the thing to which I want especially to call your attention is this. See what a picture is before us. Here is an unclean man—he has touched a dead body and so become unclean—therefore whatever he touches *also* becomes unclean. There is a loaf of bread. He has cut a slice off it and all that loaf has become unclean! Here is a mess of stew on the table— he has taken a portion from it and so made it all unclean. There is a cup of wine. He has sipped it, or he may have only touched the cup that contains it—but the whole of the wine is unclean! Here is oil, which one would think would be medicinally useful without being at all harmful, but this unclean person has put his finger to it and it is unclean! Here is meat, or vegetable food of any kind—he has touched it, so it is all unclean. I should not like to be that man—to make unclean even a chair that I might touch! To pollute the very house in which I dwelt, to be unable to shake hands with a friend without making him defiled through contact with me because I was unclean! I say again that is a dreadful picture and you must bear with me when I tell you my fear that it is not only the portrait of the erring people in Haggai's day, but also a life-like representation of some who are now present—and of multitudes who pass for very good people in these, our days! It can still be said with utmost truthfulness, "So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean."

I. So this is my subject. FIRST, THE TERRIBLE UNCLEANNESS. And here I will keep to my text.

If you want to fully understand the text, or to have it put into New Testament language, you must look at Paul's Epistle to his son, Titus, for there, in the 15th verse of the first Chapter, you get this same picture in other colors—"Unto the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." They are themselves so impure that everything becomes impure to them. Every man whose heart is not renewed by Grace is in this sad and terrible condition!

Here note, first, that *common things are polluted by men of unclean nature*. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, says, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." Nothing that God has made and that sin has not marred, is common or unclean of *itself*, "for every creature of God is good." From that day when Peter, at Joppa, saw the great sheet let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, creeping things and fowls of the air, he was taught a lesson that he needed to learn—"What God has cleansed, that call not you common." In and of itself, there is nothing that God has made which ought to be described as common. To the pure heart, everything is pure—but unclean men may make unclean every common or everyday thing of life. They can not only make wine to be unclean, as,

alas, is all but universally the case, but even bread, stew, oil, meat, or anything that is, in itself, harmless, can be rendered impure when it comes to be touched by impure men and used wrongfully!

Perhaps someone asks, "How can that be?" Well, common things can be rendered unclean when you make gods of them. If the most important questions of your life are, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?"—if you seek, first of all, in this life merely these things—though they are not, in themselves, evil, they will become *idols* and so will be unclean, for every idol is a defiling thing to those who bow down before it. Anything which takes your attention away from your God is an idol—it is another god, a rival god—and so it is the most unclean thing possible! I mean just this, that, although your ordinary pursuits may be, in themselves, perfectly innocent and may be commendable if they are followed out to the Glory of God, yet if your first objective in life is yourself and what you can get out of the common things of this life, you defile them by putting them into the place which belongs alone to God!

Next, common things may be defiled by an excess in the use of them. This may be done by gluttony. What a defilement it is of bread, the staff of life, and of those comforts which God gives to us for food, when a man makes his own belly into a god—whose temple is his kitchen! I know not that the worst of the heathen can possibly degrade themselves more than epicures and drunks do when they make those things which, in themselves, are not evil, to become their gods and indulge in them until, by their excess, they sink below the level of the beasts that perish! You can go to this excess with all kinds of things. The most common and most apparent case is that of the man who indulges in strong drink. But all other common things are capable of being polluted in the same way—and they are continually being so polluted.

Others pollute common things by excess in the keeping of them. The miser's gold is cankered by his avarice. He who must always be getting more land, even if he has to banish everybody from the range of his windows, defiles his possessions. He who in trade is exacting towards those who labor for him, demanding more and giving less than is their due, defiles his trade. He makes a dunghill of his shop and turns his traffic into treason against God! I need not go into particulars because the thing is apparent to all men, and you can see how a defiled man, coming into a business which, in itself, is perfectly right, nevertheless defiles it by excess in the keeping of the goods which God has entrusted to him as a steward to use for the good of others.

I am sure that we can also defile the common mercies of this life by ingratitude in the enjoyment of them. Are there not many who eat and drink, yet never bless God for what they have? Or who abound in riches and yet out of all their wealth there never comes from their hearts any thanksgiving to God? They are, as good old Rowland Hill used to say, like the hogs under the oak which eat the acorns that fall on the ground, but never lift up their thoughts to the tree from which the acorns come. These ungrateful people are willing to receive all the good things which God may give them and they are greedy to get more—but the Lord never receives from them even the peppercorn rent of a word of thanksgiving!

Their hearts are set upon the gifts of God and they care nothing for the gracious Giver. O Sirs, when you sit down without thanksgiving to your food and to your drink, your tables are defiled, your platters and your cups are defiled, and every mouthful that goes down your throats is defiled because you do not eat and drink to the glory of God!

See, then, in how many ways common things may be polluted by men of unclean nature.

But, even worse than that, *holy things are polluted by men of unclean nature*. It is a very sad thing to see how the most sacred things can be spoiled by the touch of unholy hands. You have all heard of Voltaire and you know something of the character of the man. I should think that nobody ever excelled Voltaire in a clever kind of blasphemy, yet I find him writing to a lady—a lady of whose character the less said, the better—"My friends say everywhere that I am not a Christian. I have just given them the lie direct by performing my Easter devotions (*mes paques*) publicly, thus proving to all my lively desire to terminate my long career in the religion in which I was born." Only fancy a man like Voltaire, after blasphemously saying of Christ that he would "crush the wretch," then going to eat "the sacrament," as some call it! And I am afraid that every Easter there are many people of that sort, who have no respect for the Lord's Day, but because their "priests" choose to call the day, "Good Friday," they have great respect for *that* day, and they will come, then, to the Communion Table, though all the year long they have never had a thought concerning Him whose death they profess to celebrate! It is a terrible thing that the innermost mysteries of the Church of Christ are often polluted by a godless, thoughtless man who, nevertheless, for some hypocritical or formalistic reason, will come even to the Table of the Lord, not hesitating to break through that guard of fire—"he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Brothers and Sisters, it is not merely the Lord's Table that an unclean man defiles, but he pollutes the Gospel by using it as an excuse for sin! Listen to him. He says, "the preacher proclaimed the mercy of God, so I am going to live in sin." Brute beast are you to talk like that! Another says, "the minister told us that salvation is all of Grace and that a great sinner glorifies God when he is converted, so why should I not be a great sinner?" O horrible wretch, you are accursed, indeed, when you can turn the very Grace of God into an excuse for your wantonness and sin?" Oh, but," says a third, "you say that salvation is all of the Sovereignty of God, therefore I cannot do anything in the matter." I know you, Sir, you are, in your own heart, so defiled that you use the blessed Gospel, itself, as the instrument of your rebellion against God! Such people are, alas, all too common—they touch with defiled hands the holiest thing and so pollute it.

But what happens if these defiled people pray? Oh, how many prayers there are which only insult the Most High God! If you sit down, or stand up, or kneel and you are, "a miserable sinner," when you neither believe that you are a sinner, nor suffer any misery because of your sin, what are you doing but provoking the Lord to anger by virtually lying in His Presence? Is not much so-called praying just of that sort? It is an awful

thing to repeat a form of prayer when your heart does not mean it. What is it but a direct insult to the Lord? Yet how can men who are defiled pray such a prayer as God will accept? They must be first cleansed before their prayers can be accepted. There is nothing so holy, in earth or in Heaven, but a man of defiled heart and conscience will pollute it if he can but lay his hand upon it.

Further, *even good works are polluted when they come from evil men.* See what it says in the text—"So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands." Here is a charitable man—he has been giving away a great deal of money, yet look how he has defiled his liberality! He sounded a trumpet before him. He was ostentatious, he desired to be thought very generous and thus, every penny that he has given to the poor has been defiled! "Take heed," says our Lord, "that you do not give your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward from your Father which is in Heaven. Therefore when you give your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward." There is no reward reserved for them at the resurrection of the just, for they have had their reward already!

Here is another man and though he is not renewed and regenerate, he is, in his own way, a very religious man. But why is he religious? Partly, out of fear! But still more, from custom! Possibly just to please his friends, or to stand well with his neighbors. Is not all that simply defiling religion?

I have also known some men appear very humble just to gain their own ends and when an unrenewed man puts on humility merely as a cloak—I was going to say that he is devilish, for the very humble man who aims at making some gain by it—the Uriah Heep of the novelist—is one of the most despicable of all people beneath the sky! When even that precious Grace of humility is touched by his hand, does he not defile it till it appears loathsome in the eyes of men?

I have seen that same man become sternly righteous in order to get revenge on his enemy. "I must do the right thing," he says, and he speaks as if it was most painful to him to have to do it. But all the while there is somebody whom he hates and he is determined to crush him! He will have his pound of flesh, or the uttermost farthing of his debt, and he tries to excuse his malice by saying, "You know, we must, sometimes, make an example of wrong-doers." Yes, other people have been very foolishly charitable and have passed by wrongs done to them—but he is going to be a defender of everything that is upright—yet he does it merely to gratify his desire for vengeance! Is he not defiling holy things and good works by touching them? Yet is not this often the case with bad men? They defile to the last degree even things that appear to be good!

And, dear Friends, the text adds that *even sacrifices are polluted when offered by unclean men*—"that which they offer there is unclean." Their lamb, their bulls, their fine flour, their oil that they pour out at the foot of God's altar—all becomes defiled! There is what professes to be a public thanksgiving to God, but it is turned into a show to the glory of men! Whenever the unregenerate world brings anything to God as a sacrifice,

what a wretched mess it makes of it! It becomes only another occasion for sinning against the Most High. Supposing a heathen should come in, on Christmas night, when professedly Christian people are supposed to be celebrating the birth of Christ, but all their cups are full of wine and they can scarcely stand for staggering? What would he think the Christ must be whose birthday they are celebrating? An unrenewed man cannot touch anything without spoiling it! Wherever he goes, he is a spoiler. The sea has often been strewn with wrecks which have been occasioned by the stupidity of merchants—and the world is full of the tombs of men who have been hurried to their graves by other men. Truly did the poet sing—

"Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

It is a mercy that unrenewed men cannot enter Heaven! If they could, Heaven would not last as Heaven for even five minutes. There would be another Hell created if unrenewed men could walk among the palms and harps of the glorified. You may do what you like with a man, but as long as he is unclean, he communicates his defilement wherever he may lay his hand.

That is a picture of every man who has not been born again! It is not a pretty picture, is it? Did you come here expecting me to say pretty things to you? I have not learned the art of doing that, but in the name of God I assure you that this is true, and I pray His Spirit to convince every unregenerate person that it is true! In your present condition you cannot do any good works, you cannot serve God—what have you to do to declare His statutes? You cannot do anything but what will displease Him until you are born again. "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God"—he cannot even *see* it! —And further, "Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." He will have to stand shivering outside its walls, but of that Kingdom he cannot be a subject until he has passed from death to life—and has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and so has been cleansed from his sinful defilement.

II. Thus I have kept to my text, but now I am going to run right away from it to speak upon THE ALL-SUFFICIENT REMEDY.

Where can we find a better type and figure of that remedy than in the chapter which I read to you just now from the Book of Numbers? [Exposition at end of sermon—was always read *before* sermon—EOD.] In Numbers 19 we have a type of the great remedy and a striking account of the uncleanness which it removed. I shall not attempt a full exposition of the rites used for purifying the unclean, but I would have you notice that, first of all, in order to the removal of uncleanness, *there was a sacrifice*. There was a red heifer, without spot, which had to be slain. There could be no sort of purification except through death, and there can be no cleansing of your defilement, my Brothers and Sisters, except through the Sacrifice of the Son of God. The red heifer and the lambs and the bulls under the Old Covenant died to teach people that the punishment of sin was the forfeiture of life—and these creatures died in the place of the offender that he might live. They were all types pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God who, in the fullness of time, came and took upon

Himself His people's sin and stood in His people's place—that He might die—"the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

There is no hope of your ever being made clean except through the blood of Him whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin. Kick not at this doctrine, I pray you, for why should Jesus die at all if you could be saved without His death? And if there is not everything in that death that is necessary for your cleansing, what do you propose to add to it? It seems to me to be sheer blasphemy to think that anything you can feel, or do, or give, can be worthy to be added to the great Sacrifice of Christ! I wish you would say, "If this is the way of salvation, by a Sacrifice offered in my place to be accepted by me, I will gladly and joyfully accept it." This is the great Truth of God—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." There is no other cleansing and there is no need of any other! Listen to this text and believe what it says—"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Is not that enough for you?

Turning again to this Book of Numbers, you will notice that *there was a burning,* for this heifer, after being killed, was burned outside the camp. This burning signified that sin was very hateful to God, that He could not bear to have it where His people lived. Sin must be put outside the camp and then, as a dead thing, it must be burned with fire and the heifer which was supposed to bear that sin must suffer that doom. Jesus also, when He took our sin, suffered outside the gate. I want you, dear Friends, to feel that sin is a hateful thing—you can never be purged from it while you love it. Shut it out from your heart as much as possible! Shut it out from your thoughts! Since it put Christ outside the camp, you must put it outside the camp. There is no cleansing a man from sin while he lives in sin and there is no possibility of forgiveness while sin is indulged in and delighted in! You must stop it—it must be burned as offal, over the wall there among the filth and refuse of the city—and be put away altogether from you. In type of which you see your Lord thus slain upon the Cross, as if He, too, had been a felon, "made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree."

Looking again at the type, you will see that *there was a water of separation.* The ashes of this red heifer were to be put into running water—not stagnant, but lively, running water—and a mixture being made with it. It was to be sprinkled upon the people as a water of separation, or purification. And, dear Friends, you and I must have the Holy Spirit pouring in upon us the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ to make us clean. There is no purification for you, my Friend, except by the Holy Spirit. There must be the water as well as the blood—they must both come to purge the conscience from dead works that we may be clean, like the priests of old, and go into the Holy Place to present acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. You must have the blood to take away the guilt of sin and you must also have the water to wash you from the pollution of sin, that you may be sanctified and set apart to the living God!

You will notice, too, that *there was an application of all this with hyssop.* Hence David says, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean."

Faith is, as it were, that little bunch of hyssop. Hyssop was a small plant, as I suppose, insignificant enough in itself and of no use except for use in sprinkling. It was dipped into the blood and then the guilty one was sprinkled—or into the water with the ashes—and with it the unclean one was sprinkled and made clean. You must have this faith if you would be saved! The blood of the Paschal Lamb would not have saved the Israelites in Egypt if it had not been smeared on the lintel and the two side posts. The scarlet line would not have saved Rahab if she had not fastened it in the window, to be the mark that her house, with its inhabitants, was to be spared. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." It is all you have to do—and this *He enables you to do*. Just simply believe that Christ is able to save you and repose yourself on that dear heart which was pierced for you!

Put yourself into those blessed hands that were fastened to the Cross and you are saved! The moment you believe in Jesus, your sins are gone—all of them, for there is no halving sin! There is a solidarity in sin—it is one great mass! So that the moment a sinner believes in Christ, all his sins—past, present and to come—are gone, and gone forever. "To come," you say, "how can that be before they are committed?" Did not Christ die, not only *before* we committed any sin, but before we had any existence? And yet even then, in His death, He put away the sin of His people. If you believe, your transgression is forgiven—you are "accepted in the Beloved!" And, as surely as you live, you shall one day stand before yon burning Throne of God, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," and you shall have no fear—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

See, Beloved, how simple is this deliverance from impurity? If the impurity was terrible, yet the remedy is so perfect, so complete, so available, that my heart dances while I talk of it to you!

Finally, this remedy must be applied to our whole nature. Remember that 19th verse that we read—"And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening." If you, dear Friend, would be clean in God's sight, you must be washed from head to foot—not merely with the washing of water, but with the washing of the Holy Spirit. "What is holiness?" said a clergyman to a poor Irish boy. "Please, Your Reverence," he said, "it is having a clean inside." And so it is—and you have to be washed that way—washed inside, washed in your very nature! The fountain of your being has to be cleansed, the source of all the pollution is to be made white! And how can this be done by any man for himself? This great purification can only be worked by a wonderful work of Grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit! But then the Holy Spirit is pledged to do this to everyone who believes in Jesus. It is a part of the Covenant—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

"Oh!" says one, "that would be delightful, but I am afraid that I should fall away, after all." That you shall *not*, for here is another Covenant promise—"I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." O glorious promise! That crowns it all! I want you, dear Friends, to have a faith that can believe God and say, "I have given myself over to Christ to save me to the end, and He will do it. And I commit to Him my soul, not for this next year, only, but for all years and all times. And I give myself up never to have any claim to myself, again—to be His forever and ever." What does He say to that? He answers, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." You see the *double picture*—Christ has His people in His hand, and then His Father comes and puts His hand over the top of Christ's! And all who believe in Christ are in that double hand of the Son and of the Father—and who shall pluck them from there? We defy earth, Heaven and Hell to ever tear away any soul that is once in the grip of the Lord Jesus Christ! Who would not have such a glorious salvation as this?

O you defiled ones, come to Him who alone can cleanse you! And when He has once cleansed you, remember that you will have need to daily wash your feet and you shall find Him waiting to wash them! But you shall never need such a complete cleansing as He gave you at the first. There shall never be a repetition of that, for, "he that is bathed, needs not but to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." May the Lord give you that cleansing if you have not had it and, if you have had it, rejoice in it with all your hearts! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NUMBERS 19; PSALM 51.

Numbers 19:1. *And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying.*— This ordinance was not given to Moses on Mount Sinai, but in the wilderness of Paran, after the people had broken their Covenant with God and were condemned to die. You know that the 90th Psalm—that dolorous dirge which we read at funerals—called "a prayer of Moses the man of God." Well might he write that Psalm, for he lived among a generation of people who were all doomed to die within a short time, and to die in the wilderness. This ordinance was especially appointed to meet the cases of those who were rendered unclean by the frequent deaths which occurred. There was to be a simple and easy way of purification for them—and the teaching of this chapter to us is that inasmuch as we dwell in a sinful world, there needs to be some simple and ready method of cleansing us, that we may be able to draw near to God.

2, 3. *This is the ordinance of the Law which the LORD has commanded, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: and you shall give her to Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth outside the camp, and one shall slay her before his face.* This was not a usual sacrifice, for the beasts offered were, as a rule, males—but this

was to be a special sacrifice. It was not to be killed by the priest, as other sacrificial offerings were, but the Lord said, "One shall slay her before his face."

4. *And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times.* This makes it a sacrifice. Otherwise it scarcely deserves the name.

5, 6. *And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: and the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.* All was to be burned and then the ashes, the essence and product of it, were to be preserved to make the water of purification needed to remove those constant defilements which fell upon the people of the camp. So the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are the very essence of Him, are perpetually preserved for the removal of our daily pollution. There was also the essence of cedar wood, that is, the emblem of fragrant immortality, for cedar was an unrotting wood. "And hyssop and scarlet." There must be the humble hyssop used, yet there must be some degree of royalty about the sacrifice, as the scarlet color implied—and all this is mixed with the blood and the flesh and the skin of the creature, to make the ashes of purification.

7. *Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the evening.* What a strange sacrifice was this, for even when it was offered it seemed to make unclean all those who had anything to do with it!

8, 9. *And he that burns her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the evening. And a man that is clean.* Now we come to the merit of Christ, for who is clean except Christ?

9. *Shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.* This ceremony does not represent the putting away of sin—that is typified in the slaying of the victims—but it represents that daily cleansing which the children of God need, the perpetual efficacy of the merit of Christ, for this red heifer was probably killed only once in the wilderness. According to Jewish tradition there never have been more than six killed. I cannot tell whether that is true or not, but certainly the ashes of one single beast would last for a long time if they were only to be mixed with water and then the water to be sprinkled upon the unclean. So this ordinance is meant to represent the standing merit, the perpetual purifying of Believers by the Sacrifice of Christ enabling them to come to the worship of God, and to mingle with holy men, and even with holy angels, without defiling them! In the fullest sense, it may be said of our Lord's atoning Sacrifice, "It is a purification for sin."

10. *And he that gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening: and it shall be to the children of Israel, and to the stranger that sojourns among them, for a statute forever.* That

was the remedy ordained by the Lord for purifying the defiled. Now notice what made this remedy so necessary.

11, 12. *He that touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purifies not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.* I wonder whether that is a revelation of our being justified through the resurrection of Christ, which took place on the third day after his death, and then our being brought into perfect rest, which represents the seventh day, through the wondrous purifying of our great Sacrifice, the Lamb of God?

13, 14. *Whoever touches the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifies not himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. This is the Law, when a man dies in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.* Think, dear Friends, what a solemn and yet what an irksome ordinance this must have been! Why, according to this regulation, Joseph could not have gone to see his father Jacob, and to be present at his death, without being defiled! You could not have watched over your consumptive child, or have nursed your dying mother without becoming defiled, if you had been subject to this Law of God! And everything that was in the tent, or in the house, became defiled, too.

15-16. *And every open vessel, which has no covering bound upon it, is unclean. And whoever touches one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.* This Law was, indeed, a yoke of bondage which our fathers were not able to bear! It was meant to teach us how easily we can be defiled. Anywhere they went, these people might touch a bone or touch a grave, and then they were defiled, and you and I, watch as carefully as we may, will find ourselves touching some of the dead works of sin and becoming defiled! It is a happy circumstance for us that there is the means of purification always at hand! We may always go to the precious blood of Jesus and may once again be washed clean—and be made fit to go up to the house of the Lord!

17-22. *And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burned heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself and wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation has not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean. And it shall be a perpetual statute to them, that he that sprinkles the water of separation shall wash his clothes and he that touches the water of separation shall be unclean until evening. And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and*

the soul that touches it shall be unclean until evening. This ordinance was partly sanitary. The Egyptians were accustomed to keep their dead in their houses, preserved as mummies. No Jew could do that, for he would be defiled. Other nations were accustomed to bury their dead, as we once did, within the city walls, or round their own places of worship, as if to bring death as near as they could to themselves. No Jew could do this, for he was defiled if he even passed over a grave! So they were driven to what God intended they should have—that is, extramural interments, and to keep the graveyard as far as they could away from the abodes of the living. The spiritual meaning of this regulation is that we must watch with great care against every occasion for sin and, inasmuch as there will be these occasions and we shall be defiled, we must constantly go to the Lord with a prayer like that of David in the 51st Psalm, which we will now read.

Psalm 51:1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* There may be some people who think themselves so holy that they cannot join in this Psalm. *I can*, for one, and I believe that there are many of you who can join with me. Just let us, for the time being, forget all others and let us come, each one for himself or herself, with David's language on our lips or in our hearts so far as it applies to our individual case.

2-19. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me. 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. 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. Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which you have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 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. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your gracious Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted to You. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; otherwise 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. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion: build the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings, then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.*

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

JOYFUL ANTICIPATION OF THE SECOND ADVENT
NO. 2496

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 20, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1885.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near. And He spoke to them a parable, Behold this fig tree and all the trees. When they are budding, you see and know, yourselves, that summer is now near. So likewise, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near."
Luke 21:28-31.

I have already said that I conceive our Lord Jesus Christ to have regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as "the beginning of the end." Although some 1800 years have rolled away since that terrible event, we, with Him, may make but small account of the interval and regard it all as one dispensation of passing away. That beautiful city was the very crown of the entire earth because God had dwelt there. It may be compared to the diamond in a ring, the jewel whose setting was the whole world—and when that jewel was destroyed and God did, as it were, grind it to powder—it was a warning that the ring, itself, would, by-and-by, be crushed and consumed, for "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The destruction of Jerusalem was, so to speak, the rolling up of the curtain on the great drama of the world's doom. It will not fall again until all the things that we now see shall have passed away and only the things that cannot be shaken—the things of God and of eternity, *which we cannot see*—shall remain.

Moreover, I think that from this chapter, if we are to understand it all—and it is confessedly very difficult to comprehend—we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be. God's long-suffering was displayed with Israel for centuries. The rebellious tribes had ample space for repentance. They had even been carried away into captivity and, by the Lord's gracious loving kindness, they had struggled back again. Yet, only changing the form of their apostasy, they continued to wander away from God. They were bent on backsliding from Jehovah even when their idols were all destroyed and the seed of Abraham had come to hate every sort of symbol and image! Yet, then, they began to set up other kinds of idols in the traditions of the fathers, and the inventions of the scribes. Thus they lost the spirit of Divine teaching in the mere letter of it and became

only formalists when they ceased to be idolaters, for, mind you, the truth, if it is dead, has no more virtue in it than falsehood has.

When the Spirit of God is gone out of that which, in itself, is right, it becomes often a cover wherein a thousand evils conceal themselves. So, at last, God's long-suffering had come to an end and, according to *current tradition*, there was a sound as of the moving of wings in the Holy Place at Jerusalem and it is reported that one priest, who stood to officiate at the altar, heard the solemn sentence, "Let Us go hence," for God was about to leave His Temple. That Temple had already torn its veil from top to bottom for very shame at what had been done to the Lord's Christ—and now the fabric, itself, must be consumed with fire, even in spite of the order of the Roman emperor. With all his power, he could not save it from ruin, and so completely was the city destroyed that Zion was plowed as a field and the very site of the Temple was, for many a day, a question in dispute.

Ah, my Friends, this was a picture—a faint picture—of what shall be the case when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again! Then, all external religion—if it is but external—shall perish in the fire and only the spiritual and the true shall live. "For, behold, the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble and the day that comes shall burn them up," as it was, with the Temple fabric! In the day that is coming, only that shall endure upon which fire can have no power. Only that shall stand which is God's own eternal Truth. So, then, I regard that destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple as the beginning of the end, and also as the rehearsal of what is yet to be.

The times before the destruction of Jerusalem were terrible to the last degree. If you have read Josephus, you cannot but feel your heart bleed for the poor Jews. They were utterly infatuated. They were so carried away with heroic madness that they fought against the Romans with a desperate valor after the city had been surrounded. Never upon this earth were there braver or more fanatical spirits than were those who were cooped up within those city walls. When they were weary with fighting the Romans, they turned their swords and their daggers against one another, being divided into sects and parties who hated each other with the utmost fury. Jerusalem was a cauldron, a boiling pot, seething full of all manner of evil, mischief and misery. The land was devoured before the Roman armies. Everybody seemed to be either driven from the country, or else to be left dead around the city walls. They crucified the Jews in such numbers that they left off doing it because they could find no more wood upon which to nail them! Those who were taken captive were sold for slaves till a penny was refused as their price—they literally sold them for a pair of shoes! The precious sons of God, as the Prophet said, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, cracked and broken—and only worthy to be thrown on the dunghill.

But all the time—the most awful time, perhaps, that any nation ever endured—the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were altogether unharmed! It is recorded that they fled to the little city of Pella, were quiet according to their Master's command and not a hair of their head perished. Indeed, it was to them a time of redemption, for the persecution

which the Jews had carried on *against them* had been exceedingly cruel, but now there was a pause. The Jews' miseries were so great that they had no care nor thought for the poor Christians! They, at least, were secure—they looked up and lifted up their heads, for their Master's prophecy was verified—and the full force of the curse fell upon those who had cried to Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Now, dear Friends, it will be just so at the last. I am not about to enter into any prophecies of what is yet to be, but here are the Master's own words—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great Glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near."

That is my subject, dear Friends, and we will consider, first, *the terrible time in which this precept is to be carried out.* "Look up, and lift up your heads." Secondly, *the remarkable precept itself.* "Look up, and lift up your heads." And thirdly, *the encouraging parable* which is given in order to induce us to look up and lift up our heads. "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know, yourselves, that summer is now near. So likewise, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near."

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE TIME in which we are told to look up and lift up our heads.

It is evidently to be a time of *fearful national trouble.* And if such times should ever come in our days—if there should ever arrive times that are worthy to be compared with the destruction of Jerusalem—here is the Master's word to us, "When you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end will not come immediately." Should great wars occur, as they certainly will, there is nothing in them to terrify the Christian! Should they even come to your own doors, it is not for Believers in Christ ever to be the victims of a scare. Whatever may happen, what is there for them to fear? The Savior gives them this precept for a time when it will be impossible for them to carry it out unless it is by faith in Him—"Look up, and lift up your heads." Whatever chastisements shall befall the nations, you shall be secure in following to the full, the principles of peace that your Master has enjoined upon you.

Further, this precept is given, not only in times of fearful national trouble, but also in times of *awful physical signs and wonders in the world*—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." It may be a season of preternatural darkness, or the solar system may be disturbed so that the stars of Heaven, which have been fixed for centuries, shall fall like unripe fruit from the trees, or as the withered leaves of autumn are scattered by the stormy blast. You know that when there is some phenomenon such as no one has ever seen before, how frightened people are! But suppose there should be visible in the heavens manifestations such as have never been seen, yet even at such times the

children of God are to look up and lift up their heads! And if they should not merely be in the heavens, but if the earth, also, should shake and tremble—if that which is supposed to be most stable should become most fickle—yet even *then* we are to look up and lift up our heads.

And if the sea and the waves thereof should roar in a manner altogether unusual, so that landsmen should hear the noise afar off, or if, being out at sea, ourselves, the waves should run mountains high and the vessel should threaten to sink to the bottom, yet this is still the precept for the worst of times that are supposable—"When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads." Even in such a trying time as that, take up the language of the 46th Psalm and say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

"Nature cannot rise to that height," says one. No, I know it cannot—but Divine Grace can! "I cannot rise to it," says one. Perhaps you cannot, but there is One who can raise you up to it, and it is He, Himself, who bids you to rise. "Then," says Jesus, "when these things begin to come to pass, *then* look up, and lift up your heads."

This terrible time which our Lord describes is, in addition, a time of *universal alarm*—"Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken." You know that fear is contagious—when one person trembles, many begin to feel the same sort of tremor. And when all the people, wherever we shall go, at home or abroad, shall be in distress—when everywhere the hearts of men shall seem to die within them, or turn, as it were. to stone, so that they cannot act or move, like those who guarded the tomb of Christ, when they saw Him rise, were as dead men—if it should ever come to that and there should be a general panic, then you who have Christ for your Master, God for your Father, eternity for your heritage and Heaven for your home—even then you may "look up, and lift up your heads."

You ask, perhaps, "How shall we do that?" You cannot do it without your Lord. With God, all things are possible. In Christ, you can do all things. Without Him you can do nothing. If you live away from your Lord and Master, in those days of terror that are yet to come, your hearts will quail for fear, and you will be like other men. If you run with them, you shall fear with them. If your strength is where *their* strength is, you shall be as weak as they are! But if you have learned to look up, why, even in those stormy times you shall keep to the habit of looking up! And if you have learned to lift your heads above the world, you shall keep to the habit of lifting up your heads! If your portion is in Heaven, it shall not be shaken when the earth rocks and reels to its very foundations. If your treasure is in Heaven, then your treasure shall not be lost.

If God is with you, you can stand between the very jaws of death, or in the center of Hell, itself, and feel no fear! With Christ by your side, you may be as calm amid the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, as

your Lord, Himself, is in His Glory. He can work even this in you if you but cast yourself on Him and live wholly to Him.

Once more, the time when we are to be thus calm and quiet, and to look up, and lift up our heads, is to be at *the coming judgment*. My dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever I might say to you about the calamities that are yet to come upon the earth. Whatever description I might give of wars, earthquakes and storms—if I were to make each word as black as night and each sentence as sharp as a killing sword—yet could I not fully describe the final scene when the Lord, Himself, shall come in all the pomp and splendor of the last dread assize! No human tongue can tell, as no human heart can imagine the terrors of that tremendous day, especially the sight of the once-crucified King when He appears seated upon His Great White Throne, and when the summons shall ring out—

"Come to judgment!
Come to judgment, come away!"

when the grave shall not conceal the unnumbered dead, nor even the depths of the ocean suffice for a hiding place from Him that sits upon the Throne, for all shall be gathered before Him! Every eye shall see Him and they, also, that pierced Him. You will be there, my Friend! You will be there as certainly as you are here!

O you who are without Christ, all the fear and dread you have ever had in this life will be as *nothing* compared with the alarm and terror of that day! Your fears, when you have been laid low with fever, and have been near to death's door, will be but as child's play compared with what you will feel at that tremendous day which is soon to come! Yet Christ says to His people, concerning even that time of terror, "Look up, and lift up your heads." There is nothing for you who have put your trust in Him, to ever fear! It is your Judge who is coming, but He comes to acquit you and to exhibit you to the assembled universe clad in His own righteousness which you already wear. He who is coming is your Lord, your Friend, your Bridegroom! He who has sworn to deliver you is coming to call your body from the grave and to raise you up to dwell together with Him forever. That day of Christ's appearing shall be to you a morning of the ringing out of harps and a time of joyous shouts and blissful songs—

"There shall be weeping, there shall be weeping,
At the Judgment Seat of Christ,"

but not for you who are in Him! It shall be your joy day, your wedding day, the brightest day in all your history!—

"When these things begin to come to pass,
Then look up, and lift up your heads."

I must leave this first point concerning the terrible time when this precept is to be carried out by reminding you that when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, the heavens shall tell us—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." The earth shall tell us, for upon the earth there shall be "distress of nations, with perplexity." The sea shall tell us, for the sea and the waves thereof shall roar. Men shall tell us, for men's hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. And then, as all these voices shall proclaim His coming, our own eyes shall tell us, for they shall see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great Glory." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." And

in anticipation of that glorious day, each Believer can say with the Patriarch Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

II. Now I come to THE REMARKABLE PRECEPT itself—"Then look up, and lift up your heads."

My dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some Christian people who seem to think that it is almost wicked to look up, and lift up their heads. When they come before God, their cry is, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." Well, but surely a true child of God gets above that condition! He *is* a sinner, it is true and, as far as he is a sinner, he is unhappy, but still, he has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit! He has been washed in the blood of the Lamb! He has been adopted into the family of God—surely there is some nobler note for him to reach than that doleful dirge! If, amid plague and pestilence, or amid earthquakes and storms and wars, we are to look up, and lift up our heads, that ought to be our daily attitude—

"Why does your face, you humble souls,
Those mournful colors wear?
What doubts are these that waste your faith,
And nourish your despair?"

Listen to your Lord's gracious command—"Look up, and lift up your heads." What does this precept mean? First, it implies *an absence of fear*. "Perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment." He that fears is not made perfect in love. What cause has a Christian for fear? What is there that can harm the man whom God loves? Will He trample on His child, or allow anyone else to hurt him? No, for "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." The sun and moon and stars. The earth and the seas. Wars and pestilences all work together for good to God's dear children. Let us therefore cast out all fear!

This precept, surely, also means *the removal of all grief*. While the Christian is here, there will always be more than enough to make him grieve as a man, but there will also always be Grace in Christ to wipe every tear away. We are born to grief, but then, we are also *born again*, so we must not give way to weeping more than is right. We must not be overburdened with sorrow, lest we become like a drunk man. It is as evil to be drunk out of the bitter cup of affliction as out of the sweet cup of sinful pleasure. Let us put away our sorrow, grief and misery, and say with the Prophet Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

"Look up, and lift up your heads." This precept of our Lord seems to me to be very wonderful because it does not merely mean that there is to be in Believers no fear and no grief, but that *even in the worst times we are to show the signs of joy*. This expression implies to me signs and tokens of an outward kind—"Look up, and lift up your heads." Our Lord seems to say to us, "Now fly your flags and ring your bells! Let your

hearts be exceedingly glad—so joyous that those who look at you cannot help seeing your happiness. "Look up, and lift up your heads." Let there be no looking down because the earth is quaking and shaking, but let there be a looking *up* because you are going to rise from it! No looking down because the graves are opening—why should you look down? You will quit the grave, never more to die. "Lift up your heads." The time for you to hang your heads, like bulrushes, is already over and will certainly be over when the Lord is coming and your redemption draws near! Therefore, "look up, and lift up your heads."

It will be an amazing sight when Jesus comes again! It must have been an amazing sight when Jerusalem was destroyed, but the true Christian knew all that was going to happen. And all that *did* happen, terrible as it was, was only a confirmation of his faith and a fulfillment of his Lord's prophecies. So shall it be when, at the Last Great Day, we walk among the sons of men calmly and serenely! They will marvel at us. They will say to us, "How is it that you are so joyous? We are all alarmed, our hearts are failing us for fear." And we shall take up our wedding hymn, our marriage song, "The Lord is come! The Lord is come! Hallelujah!" The burning earth shall be the flaming torch to light up the wedding procession! The quivering of the heavens shall be, as it were, but as the dancing of the feet of angels in those glorious festivities! And the booming and crashing of the elements shall, somehow, only help to swell the outburst of praise to God, the Just and Terrible, who is to us our exceeding joy!

I cannot speak as I would upon this glorious theme, but I think I catch some of our Master's meaning when He said, "Then look up, and lift up your heads." Did He not mean that then, and always, Christians are to be filled with *an inward peace* and with a *holy expectancy* mixed with it? Whatever happens, all is well with the righteous! I know not what is to be, nor do I wish to know, but I do know that all is well and that all shall be well forever and ever. "Look up, and lift up your heads," Beloved, for it is better than before. There is something brighter and more joyful coming than we have ever yet known! All our earthly bliss is but as the vestibule of our eternal delights. The Lord's Kingdom is yet small and feeble, apparently, but it is to be world-wide and He, Himself, is to be manifested in His Glory! Therefore, let us look up, and lift up our heads. Look up for Him who is coming! Look up for Him who has already come! Lift up your eyes to the hills, from where your help comes "Look up, and lift up your heads." It seems to me as if the text, itself, is quite enough to make you march to the strains of martial music straight away to victory! Come, let us be a band of men and women who fully trust our Lord and, who henceforth say farewell to doubt and trembling! "Look up, and lift up your heads."

III. Our text finishes with A PARABLE TO ENCOURAGE US TO OBEY THE PRECEPT—"Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is near."

First, notice the *signs* mentioned in this parable. Summer is the time of the bursting of buds, the unfolding of flowers, the forming and ripening of the fruit. There may come many a shower in the spring, but that will not hinder the arrival of summer—it will rather help summer to come! It may be cold and chill beneath the black cloud that hovers over

us for a while, but that will not hinder summer. "April showers bring forth May flowers." All these things are the tokens of the summer's coming. So, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in trouble, expect that you are going to have a blessing! When you are passing through a great trial, look out, for there is another sign that summer is coming! Do not fear to look up, and lift up your heads, for—

"The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

"Look up, and lift up your heads." I wish we could get into the habit of believing that every time of need, every time of pain, every time of depression is but the commencement of a season of blessing! "Though now, for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations," remember that the Lord's objective in this experience is "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Therefore, as you look at the black buds on the tree of your life, say to yourself, "I wonder what bright flower is coming out there!" Look at the dark bulbs, without any beauty at all in them, which we put into the ground, yet the flowers which come out of them are charming and fragrant. So, when God plants some black bulbs in the garden of your soul, do not cry out because of their ugliness, but look for the flowers that shall, in due time, appear—and expect something beautiful from God's sowing!

Yes, and if again the heavens should be darkened, the earth should shake, the sea should roar, kingdoms should be dissolved and pestilence should slay its myriads, yet still "look up, and lift up your heads." Your Master bids you do so! He, the Crucified, who made a coronet of beauty out of the crown of thorns. He who is bedecked today with jewels which are the scars of His own suffering. He whose very Glory it is that He once died—He it is who would have you see, in all the trials of the present hour, tokens of the benediction that is yet to come! Therefore, "look up, and lift up your heads."

Further, the signs mentioned in this parable tell of *certainty*. When the trees are in bloom, hastening to display their leaves, there may come a frost, there may come many cold days—there will certainly come rough winds and clouds—but the summer will come along in due time. Every day will bring it nearer. All the devils in Hell cannot keep the spring from going on to summer, it is not possible! The forces of nature are so ordained by God that the trees must come to their perfection at the crowning of the year and, in like manner, the signs that God gives to His people, though they may not always seem promising, are very sure.

Have you trusted in Christ? Then, to you He has given peace and joy! Are you still trusting Him and will you continue to hang only upon Him and to trust wholly in Him? Then, your righteousness shall break forth as brightness and your salvation as a lamp that burns! The Lord will light your candle. The night may be very long, but the morning must come when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise upon you with healing in His wings, and you shall "go out and grow up as the calves of the stall."

As for the coming of our Divine Master and the triumph of everything that is right and true. As to the fulfillment of His Covenant and the perfecting of all His everlasting purposes. As for the salvation of His elect and redeemed ones, Heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word shall not pass away till every jot and tittle of it shall be fulfilled! God is *with* you, God is *in* you—who can stand against Him? Trust in the Lord, even in the mighty God of Jacob, and you shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end! Go your way, and say, "All is well, for it is in my Father's hands; therefore will I look up, and lift up my head."

And as for you who are *not* His people, begin to look out for a place to hide yourselves, for Christ is coming! O you earthworms, begin to look for the holes into which you will wish to creep to hide yourselves! I wish that you would so look out for a hiding place that you would find one in that Man who presents Himself as the best hiding place for every sinner who will trust Him. God bring you all to find refuge in Christ! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 21.

Luke 1-6. *And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw, also, a certain poor widow casting in her two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say to you, that this poor widow has cast in more than they all: for all these have, of their abundance, cast in to the offerings of God: but she of her penury has cast in all the living that she had. And as some spoke of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which you behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* This was literally true of the Temple at Jerusalem and, today, there remains nothing of it. It is also true of all earthly buildings and of all earthly things. However firm they appear to be, as though they might outlast the centuries, themselves, yet the things which are seen are temporal and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, they shall all melt into thin air and pass away. "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

7. *And they asked Him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?* Those questions are always being asked. They are being asked at this very day about Christ's Second Coming. They shall have no answer, for Christ, Himself, assures us that as the Son of Man, He knew not the day nor the hour of His own coming. As the Son of God He knew all things, but as a Man like ourselves, He was willing to be a know-nothing upon that point.

8. *And He said, Take heed that you are not deceived: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go you not therefore after them.* This passage refers, in the first place, to the siege of Jerusalem and in its second and yet fuller meaning, to the coming of the Lord. It looks to me that our Lord regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as "the beginning of the end," the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And, as before the destruction of Jerusalem there were many false Christs, so will there be more of them the nearer the end of the world

shall be. This shall be to us one of the tokens of our Lord's speedy appearing, but we shall not be deceived thereby. "Take heed that you are not deceived: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go you not therefore after them."

9. *But when you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end will not come immediately.* Everywhere throughout the Scriptures there is this double message of our Lord—"Watch, for I may come at any moment. Expect Me to come, and to come soon; yet never be terrified as though the time were immediately at hand, for there are certain events which must occur before My Advent." How to reconcile these two thoughts, I do not know and I do not care to know. I would like to be found in that condition which consists in part of watching and in the other part of patiently waiting and working till Christ appears.

10, 11. *Then said He to them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great sights shall there be from Heaven.* Someone says, perhaps, "All this we have had, times without number, yet Christ has not come." Just so, for these signs are not sent to minister to our *curiosity*, but to keep us always on the watch. And whenever we mark these earthquakes, wars, famines and pestilences, then are we to think, "Behold, He comes," and watch the more earnestly! You know how it is often with the man who is very sick. It is reported that he cannot last long. You call many times, yet he is still living—do you, therefore, conclude that he will not die? No, but you more certainly expect that he will soon be gone. So is it with Christ's Second Advent. He bids us note the signs of His coming, and yet, when some of those signs appear, He does not come—all this is to keep us still on the alert watching for Him. Even in His own day, when He so spoke that His servants expected Him to come at once, yet He also added words from which they might fairly judge that He would *not* come directly.

12-16. *But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it shall turn out for you an occasion for testimony. Settle it, therefore, in your hearts, not to meditate before what you shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.* Nowadays, the fashion is always to meditate, and think, and excogitate a gospel for yourself. To be a *thinker*—that is the very crown of perfection to some minds—but it is not so according to our Master's mind! His servants are to speak not their own thoughts, but His thoughts! If they will keep to His Gospel, He will give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. We are to be the *repeaters* of a message which is given to us, not the manufacturers of tidings! There is to be an exhibition of inventions very soon and it is quite right and proper that there should be, but I pray that none of us may ever be the inventors of a new Gospel, or of new doctrines, or of new systems of theology, but, on the contrary, let us settle it in our hearts that we will speak Christ's Word all our days! And if thereby we are brought

into trouble, we will depend upon Him to give us a mouth and wisdom which all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16. *And you shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.* How true that has been many a time! For how long a period the saints were martyred! And the days of martyrdom are not yet over.

17, 18. *And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.* During all the terrible siege of Jerusalem, it is believed that not one Christian perished, for God took special care of the followers of His Son. They were the most hated of all men, yet nobody could touch them! None of them took up arms, for it was contrary to their religion as, indeed, if we are Christians, it is contrary to *our* religion to resist evil, but we are to bear and endure. The early Christians did so—and because of their very defenselessness, they were safe under the guardian care of the Lord their God!

19-24. *In your patience possess you your souls. And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is near. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains and let them which are in the midst of it depart; and let not them that are in the countries enter into it. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled.* And it is so even to this day. Here is another instance in which the Lord bade His people expect His coming and yet, at the same time, told them that He would not come so long as Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. "Until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled" means the time when the Messiah shall gather in those Gentiles to Himself, for, when He shall appear, they shall look on Him whom they have despised, and turn to Him whom they have so long rejected.

26. *And there shall be signs in the sun*—As there were at the destruction of Jerusalem, and as there will be at the Second Coming of Christ. We have had a rehearsal of that coming in the destruction of the favored city, but the grand event, itself, who shall rightly speak of it?

25-27. *And in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's heart failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see.*—Whether they wish to see Him or not, "then shall they see"—

27-32. *The Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near. And He spoke to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know of yourselves that summer is now near. So you, also, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near. Verily I say to you, This generation shall not pass away, till all is fulfilled.* As I understand it, for the first time. And afterwards it shall be fulfilled

again. It is a prophecy that bears two meanings—an outer and an inner. It has been fulfilled once and it shall soon be fulfilled again.

33, 34. *Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.*— Please notice that "cares of this life" are put down with over-eating and over-drinking, for men can be intoxicated and surfeited with care, either the care of getting, or the care of keeping, or the care of spending, or the care of losing. Any of these cares may cause a surfeit and a drunkenness. Therefore, "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life."—

34. *And so that day come upon you unawares.* All that you can see in this world, you are to regard as being doomed to destruction. That destruction commenced, so to speak, when Jerusalem fell beneath the Roman sword. Everything earthly is doomed. You are living, not in your eternal mansions, but you are living a makeshift life. You are passing through a wilderness, you are pilgrims, you are sojourners—this is not your rest. Do not get to love this world, or to be taken up with it. Do not strike your roots into it—you are not to dwell here and to always live here. You are walking among shadows—regard them as such. Hug them not to your bosom. Feed not your souls upon them, lest, when that Day comes, before whose coming all of them shall melt away, you shall be filled with amazement and shame.

35-37. *For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. And in the daytime He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mountain that is called the Mount of Olives.* You know what He did there, for—

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

Jesus always practiced what He preached. He said to His disciples, "Watch, therefore, and pray always," so He, Himself, both watched and prayed.

38. *And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the Temple, to hear Him.* May we all be willing, not only to hear Him, but also to heed what He says! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—343, 347, 364.

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A NEW LEAF FOR THE NEW YEAR
NO. 2497

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 27, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 27, 1864.

"And they said one to another, We are truly guilty concerning our brother." Genesis 42:21.

YOU know the story from which our text is taken, how Joseph's brothers, being envious of him, sold him for a slave, deceived his aged father concerning him and then endeavored to forget the deed. They appear to have gone on with sad consciences for a number of years, but, by-and-by, there was a sore famine in all lands and from all countries people went into Egypt to buy corn. So old Jacob told his sons that they must go down into Egypt to buy from the stores there laid up for the time of famine. And they went, not knowing that Joseph was there in great power. He knew them and, at first treated them very roughly, charged them with being spies, and put them in prison for three days. Afterwards he said to them, "If you are true men, let one of your brothers be bound in the house of your prison: go you, carry corn for the famine of your houses: but bring your youngest brother to me; so shall your words be verified, and you shall not die." Then it was, but not till then, that they said, one to another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother."

See, from this narrative, how, sometimes, trouble and sorrow bring men to repentance. Personal affliction or bereavement, or trial of one kind or another may be most useful to us by making us think about our own condition in the sight of God, and our actions toward Him as well as with regard to our fellow men. There may be someone in this congregation who has had sore troubles, wave upon wave, affliction upon affliction. It will be a source of eternal gratitude to you, my dear Friend, if your afflictions should make you think of your conduct towards Christ, so that you should be moved to say, "I have been truly guilty concerning my Savior, concerning Him who took upon Himself the form of a Man, that He might be my Brother and might redeem me from going down into the pit."

I shall limit my discourse to this one topic—in our treatment of Christ, we have all been guilty. And I shall try to press this Truth of God home with a demand, in God's name, for repentance on account of the way in which we have dealt with His Son, Jesus Christ, our greater Joseph. I shall be happy if any have come here in trouble, if that trouble should work with my rebuke to stir up their hearts and move them to repentance before God. When a certain man lost his eyesight, that sight being gone deprived him of the power to join in many a merry party and to go on in his former sin. He then began to attend the House of God and there

he found the Savior. And he was in the habit, afterwards, of saying that he was always blind while he could see, but after he had lost his sight, *then* it was that he truly began to see! There may be some here who are afflicted, perhaps not exactly as that man was, but in some other way. If so, I hope that they, too, will soon be able to say with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word." It will be a good beginning towards such a blessed consummation if they should now confess that they have been guilty concerning Christ.

I will try to handle my subject in this way. First, let us consider *our treatment of Christ.* Secondly, let us think of *Christ's treatment of us.* And thirdly, let us ask the question, *What then?*

I. First, let us consider OUR TREATMENT OF CHRIST.

Let us begin by taking ourselves in the mass, without any division of character. How have we and the whole human race treated the Lord Jesus Christ? He came to this earth with love in His heart, with love in His eyes, with love in His hands, with love on His lips, He was altogether *Love Incarnate* and when He made His appearance, what was the reception He met with? You kings, have you not a palace for Him who is the King of Kings? Let the purples of Thyatira, let all the dainty damasks of the East be brought forth to wrap the Holy Child Jesus! No, alas, it is not so! There is no palace, nor even a private house that will receive Him as a guest, and even of the place where others might lodge it is written, "there was no room for *Him* in the inn." He lies in the manger of a *stable* because there is no room for Him in any better place! He grows up, but who are His associates? Is He surrounded by the wise? No, they cavil at Him! Do the righteous, or those who pretend to be so, become His disciples? No, these hypocrites are His worst enemies. He finds no associates who love Him except a few poor and humble fishermen—and these have had to have new hearts before they could see any beauty in Him. "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief."

The world has plenty of music for its greatest murderers—

"***Look, the conquering hero comes,***
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums,"

sings the world when it sees the warrior come home with his garments red with the gore of his fellow men! Let him ride through the street in pomp and splendor! Run to your windows, climb to your chimney tops and look down upon the gigantic murderer as he goes along the streets in triumph. But the world has no songs for the Savior, no pomp, no praise, no acclamations for Him! A few peasants and children once cry, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" But in a day or two that note is changed and, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" is the world's cry concerning the only Redeemer the world will ever see!

If He had been only treated thus—with derision and shame—it were enough, one would think, to provoke God to dash the world in pieces. But this, alas, was not all. We took the Prince of Glory—yes, *we* did it, for had we been there we would have done the same as they did, and we really have done the same in spirit if not in act—we took the Prince of Glory, we scourged Him at the whipping post, we hounded Him through the streets, having no compassion upon Him. We took our sins and drove them like nails through His hands and feet. We lifted Him high up on the

Cross of our transgressions and then we pierced His heart through with the spear of our unbelief! This is the treatment that we, Brothers and Sisters, have given to Jesus! Surely, we did well to sing, just now, if the words really came from our hearts as well as from our lips—

"Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!
And love beyond degree."

You cannot stand, even in imagination, by the Cross of Calvary, and see the writhing body of your Redeemer nailed to the accursed tree, without saying, as you wring your hands in a very agony of sorrow, "Yes, we are truly guilty concerning the Lover of our soul, Christ Jesus, the Friend that sticks closer than a brother."

But now we will divide the house and pick out the Christians, those who know and love the Savior. May I speak for you, dear Friends? I am sure I can say for myself and, I suppose I can also say for you, that we Christians are truly guilty concerning Christ, our Brother. We do love Him. If He should ask each one of us, as He asked Simon Peter, "Do you love Me?" We could, every one of us say, even though it brought tears into our eyes, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."—

"Do not I love You, O my Lord?
Behold my heart and see!
And turn each odious idol out
That dares to rival Thee."

Yet we are truly guilty concerning our Lord, first, because *we have exhibited such little faith in Him.* Beloved, we must never put our unbelief of Christ among our little sins, for it is one of the greatest that we can possibly commit! When Mr. Marshall, who wrote a famous treatise on Sanctification, had been, for some years, in great distress of mind, he went to converse with that eminent Divine, Dr. Thomas Goodwin. After he had mentioned a great many of his sins, Goodwin very pertinently observed, "But, friend Marshall, you have left out the greatest sin of all." "And what is that, Doctor?" he enquired. "Why," said the Doctor, "you have left out the great sin of doubting the power of Christ to forgive you all your sins!" Surely, this is a sin of no mean sort, yet these doubts concerning our Savior are very common to us and I am sure He does not deserve them! Is there anything that vexes you more in a friend than for that friend to mistrust you? I must confess that although I can bear many things, this is one of the points upon which I feel very tender. And for me to live with a person who habitually mistrusted me would, I think, be like living in the midst of a Hell upon earth! Yet we treat our Lord Jesus thus! Some of us habitually mistrust Him and the best of us too frequently fall into doubts and fears.

I think I may also speak for you, my Brothers and Sisters, when I say that *even concerning temporal affairs* we are truly guilty with regard to our Lord. We often get to fretting and worrying when, if we were but just to our Divine Friend, we would be in peace of mind, leaving all our cares with Him. When Cromwell sent Mr. Bulstrode Whitelocke across to Sweden as his ambassador, he took ship and, the night coming on to be stormy, he sat up in great uneasiness of mind, fretting about the unsettled state of the nation, and thinking that he was living in the worst and

most perilous times that men had ever known. But he had a godly valet, and his servant said to him, "Mr. Whitelocke, how did God govern the world before you were born? Did He manage it all right?" "Oh, yes," promptly answered Whitelocke, "He managed the world with wisdom." "And when you are dead, Sir," asked the valet, "will God be able to manage the world without you?" "Oh, certainly!" replied Whitelocke, "He does not need *me*." "Well, then," said the sensible servant, "don't you think, Sir, that He is able to manage the affairs of the world with you just as well as He could without you, and would it not be better for you to go to bed and get some sleep? And then, if God spares your life, you may wake up in the morning and do your best, rather than sit here in this state of anxiety and fretfulness." There was great wisdom in what that man said and many of us need just the lesson that Mr. Whitelocke had to learn. When I think of the way in which we have been running here and there, and forgetting the exceedingly great and precious promises of our ever-glorious Lord, I must again say that we are truly guilty concerning our Brother.

And, dear Friends, how guilty we have been *in the matter of our love to Jesus!* Another year is almost gone, let us review it. Have we loved Christ this year as we should have done? Our love, perhaps, can be measured as well by our conversation as by anything. Have we talked much about Jesus Christ? Have we said a good word concerning Him in all company into which we have been drawn? When Mr. John Locke was brought into the company of two noted philosophers—I believe Buccleuch and Halifax—they began talking a great deal of nonsense and Mr. Locke took out his pencil and pocketbook and commenced to write. One of them asked him what he was doing. "Well," he replied, "I have been for years desiring to be introduced into the company of such distinguished philosophers as you are, and now that I have that honor I should like to take down all that you say." This was a well-deserved rebuke and, of course, they then began to speak upon some other topic which might minister to their companion's edification.

Now, Beloved, have we, when we have been in company, always talked as Christians should talk? The philosopher should speak like a philosopher. Have we, as Christians, spoken like Christians? When Hugh Latimer was being examined as to his faith, he said that he began to speak without any very great care, but presently he heard a pen scratching on some paper and then he knew that, behind the arras, the hangings of the room, there was sitting a man who was taking down all that he said. "Then," said Latimer, "I endeavored to speak with discretion." So, dear Friends, we know that there is a God who is preserving every word we have uttered. If the record of the past year could be read out to us just now, would it show that we have talked much of Jesus? I fear that, in many cases, it would rather compel us to say that we have been truly guilty concerning our Brother.

We may measure our love to Him, too, by *our service for Him and our sympathy with Him*. What have we done for Jesus this year? What have some of you given to Him? Take stock of your gifts to the cause of Christ. I know that some of you have given even beyond your means and my Master will amply reward your liberality. But I know, also, that there are

some who can talk loudly concerning the things of God, but who never seem to have had enough religion for it to have much effect upon their pockets! I will give but little for your love to Christ if you bring Him no offering as a token of your affection.

Then, have you faithfully served Christ in the matter of soul-winning? The greatest wish of Christ's heart is to win the souls of men. Has that been *your* highest wish? Has your soul ever longed and panted to be useful to your Lord? Have you ever really felt the weight of men's souls upon your heart and conscience? Did you ever fully comprehend these two words—*perishing souls*? Did you ever get to the essence of that word *perishing*? Have you ever understood the meaning of that word, *soul*, and have you ever been awakened by it to a holy ardor which has expended itself, first, in agonizing prayer, and next in earnest, self-sacrificing effort that you might win the souls of your fellow creatures? In reviewing my own ministry in this place, with the vast opportunities which God has given me, I stand here to confess that I am truly guilty concerning my Brother. Oh, that I had wept more over you dying men! Oh, that I had pleaded with you more passionately! Oh, that I had more fervently persuaded you, as though God did beseech you by me, to be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus and to lay hold of eternal life! The past is gone beyond recall, but we must confess the sin of it and you, too, dear Friends, must surely make the same confession that I have done. Have *you* served Christ as you could have desired? Will you not join with me in the humiliating admission, "O Lord, we are truly guilty concerning our Brother"?

Now think, for a minute or two, of anything else in which you have had to do with Christ. Consider, fellow Christians, with regard to *communion with your Lord*. Have you been as much in fellowship with Christ as you could have wished to be? Have you been often enough under the apple tree in the midst of the woods? Have you eaten all you could of His pleasant fruits? Have you been sitting as much as you might in His banqueting house, under the banner of His love? How stands the record as to your private prayer? Have you wrestled with the Angel of God as you could have wished to do? Have you brought back with you an abundance of treasure from God's great storehouse, of which He has given you the key? If not, confess that you are truly guilty concerning your Brother! And how about your outward life? Has that been according to the example of Christ? Have your common, everyday actions all been sanctified with the Word of God and prayer? Has your business been done as in the sight of God? Has there been, about the whole of your life, a clear ring, an unmistakable sound, so that you can say, "To me to live is Christ. I have set the Lord always before me. I honestly endeavor to magnify Him in all my acts"? I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, that in this matter, also, we shall *again* have to confess that we are truly guilty concerning our Brother.

Now let us deal for a little while with another class of persons. There are some here, I trust, who have lately been brought to know the Savior. Perhaps it was this morning, or some day last week, when you first saw the Lord. Beloved Friends, you who are beginners in the Divine Life, shall I go back with you in thought and help you to confess your guiltiness to-

wards Christ? I will confess it on my own account. I remember well when I first found Him and I remember, too, the grief I felt that I should ever have treated Him so ill. He loved me and yet I had despised Him. He was always looking upon me, yet I would not look to Him. He was the true Lover of my soul and yet His name had no music in it for me—and His Person had no beauty to my eyes. He was preached to me, yet I did not trust Him. Dear friends pleaded with me to give my heart to Him, yet I chose the world's pleasures and vanities, and would not seek after Him. He came to me, He knocked at the door of my heart, but I said to Him, "Get You gone." He knocked again, and yet again, and sometimes I thought of opening my heart to Him, but instead of doing so I barred the door against Him and said, "I will not have this Man to reign over me."

It was never my sin to curse Him to His face, but that may, perhaps, have been the sin of some of you. You may, possibly, have persecuted His people, despised His Sabbaths, spoken ill of His ministers, left His Word unread, and His Throne of Grace unvisited. Yet all this while He had loved you with an everlasting love, He had bought you with His precious blood, He had determined to make you His Brothers and Sisters and to bring you to His own right hand in Glory, though you had no respect or regard for Him. O dear Friends, as you review the past, I am sure you will need no pressing on my part to make each one of you say, "Ah, indeed, I am truly guilty concerning my Brother." Our unkindness to Christ is one of the things we ought to confess as soon as ever He brings us to His dear feet. He has forgiven it all! He never harbors even half of a hard thought concerning us—and this makes it all the more bitter for us to reflect that we should ever have treated such a Friend so badly. The fact that He has been so kind and generous to us, although so long neglected and despised by us, ought only to deepen the sense of our guilt concerning our Lord.

There are some belonging to another class, here, and they are truly guilty concerning Christ, yet it is of little use for me to talk to them, for Christ, Himself, is nothing to them. There are those even here, I am afraid, to whom the story of a dying Savior is only like an idle tale. Ah, Sinner, if you do not change your note in this life, you will sing another tune, by-and-by! I know you say that you do not owe Christ anything and that you will not give Him your heart. Ah, Soul, unless Divine Grace shall renew you and give you another mind, your portion will be where the wicked lie—forever banished from all hope. "Well," said an anxious wife to the physician after he had seen her husband, "what do you think of him?" "Well, Madam," he answered, "he certainly is a little better today, but I must not deceive you. He will die, it is only a question of time." That will be true of us all, unless Christ comes again soon.

Sinner, you may never be as strong and healthy as you are today. You may have said to yourself, "I shall not need to think of dying yet." But *it is only a question of time* and oh, how short that time may be! And then it will be said concerning you, "Yes, he is gone," and we shall ask, "But where is he gone?" And the answer will be, "He is gone where those must go who are guilty concerning Christ, but who will not confess their guilt, who will not believe in Him, who will not trust Him, but who choose to keep their sins and to rely on their own righteousness and prefer the

pleasures of this world to all Christ's love and Grace. He despised the Savior's power to save and so, because he would not come to Christ that he might have eternal life, he is gone, not to his rest, but to share the portion of the ungodly in Hell forever and ever." The Lord have mercy upon you, dear Friends, if you are in danger of such a doom, and renew your hearts by His Holy Spirit, for His name's sake!

Thus have I, as it were, brought before you the Truth of the text as it may be applied to the Lord Jesus Christ—and left it to every man and woman's conscience to decide whether they ought not to join us in saying, "We are truly guilty concerning our Brother."

II. Now, in the second place, we will, with great brevity, consider CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF US.

Oh, for an angel's tongue with which to tell this wondrous tale! There is Christ looking down from Heaven and marking all our sin and ill behavior towards Him. He is not weak, for He is very God of very God! He is able to avenge the insults to His name, to cast us off for all our shameful treatment of Him and to make us smart forever under the Divine lash of infinite and inflexible Justice. But how has He treated us?

Ah, Sirs, *He has not given us one ill word!* Some of us have been for many years living in sin, yet has the Lord Jesus Christ said one ill word to us, or against us? No, instead of that, *Jesus has put in many a good word for us*. The barren tree would have been cut down long ago as a cumberer of the ground, but Jesus pleaded, "Spare it yet another year." That gray-headed sinner would not have been here, now, but that Jesus, that very Jesus whom he despised, has stood between him and the destroying angel, and so he is still allowed to live. Oh, that the goodness of God might lead him to repentance! Our Lord has not pronounced one curse upon us! He has not said one harsh word to us, but, on the contrary, He has pleaded for us again and again.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you and I have vexed our Master much and grieved Him sorely, yet *He has never broken any of His promises to us*. Has He ever once failed us in our times of need? Has He ever said, "Get you gone; you are an unprofitable servant and an unfaithful friend"? Oh, no! We have not had a frown from Him, nor a hard word—nothing but love! If He has sometimes chastened us, it has been in love to our souls, that He might unite us more closely to Himself. I am sure that you have no fault to find with your Lord. I marvel at His patience with me. I do not know anything that astonishes me more, next to His redemption of my soul by blood, than this—that He should bear with such a poor unworthy sinner as I am! It astonishes me that He should still go on sanding down such a knotty piece of timber as I am and that He should persevere in making such common clay as I am into a vessel meet for His own royal use! You see, Brothers and Sisters, He has begun with us, and He will not leave off until He has perfected us! He has loved us from eternity and He will not cease to love us through the eternal ages of the future! There have been ten thousand times ten thousand reasons why He might have given us up and cast us away, like broken vessels, yet we know, Beloved, that He will never give us up, but that He will bring us safely Home to be forever with Him in His Glory!

You and I have had *nothing but kindness* at Christ's hands all these years. O you venerable sires, with your hoary heads, who have known the Lord for forty, fifty, or even 60 years, speak if you know anything against Him! And you young men in your prime—and you who are serving your Savior in the burden and heat of the day—speak if you know anything against Him! And you matrons and maidens who love Him and seek His company in secret, if He has ever done you an ill turn, or turned His back on you, speak if you know anything against Him! You cannot, for His treatment has been all love and nothing but love! Jesus died and oh, where are the words that can fitly tell this story? Behold, what manner of love is this! "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus rises again, but He rises with the same love in His heart! He ascends to Heaven, but He still pursues the same mighty work that He began while He was here! Up there He is pleading for us, and preparing a heavenly mansion for us, and never ceasing from doing us good with both His hands! Now, surely, when we think of this generous conduct of His towards such undeserving worms as we are, we may well put a deeper emphasis into our confession, "Yes, Lord, yes! We are truly guilty concerning our Brother!"

III. Time flies, or I would have dwelt at greater length upon our Lord's treatment of us. I have merely mentioned it to you in a hurried manner, and now we are to conclude with this question—WHAT THEN? Thinking first of our treatment of Christ and next of His treatment of us, what then?

As we are so near to another new year, one of the first things for us to do is this—*let us who are Christians turn over a new leaf*. If we have been guilty concerning our Brother, let us not go on adding sin to sin, but let us endeavor to amend our ways in the sight of God and not be so guilty concerning Christ as we have been. We ought to be humbled in the recollection of our past sin. There was a little boy whose father, to teach him a lesson, told him that every time he did a certain thing that was wrong, a nail should be driven into a post, but that, on every occasion when he did anything that was right and kind, one of those nails should be pulled out. Master Benjamin became exceedingly careful when the post had got well studded with nails and, after a while, they were drawn out, one after another, and soon his father had the pleasure of extracting the last one. He expected to see the lad begin jumping for joy, but, instead of that, the boy stood weeping and his father said to him, "Well, Benny, my boy, you see that all the nails are pulled out now." "Yes, father," he sadly answered, "*but the holes are left.*"

So now, suppose that next year we should, by the effectual working of the Spirit of God, be so sanctified in our walk and conversation that our besetting sins should be destroyed and that we should be delivered from these sins that we have been confessing, yet, still, the holes of the past evils would be left—and it is only our Lord Jesus Christ who can fill those holes. It is only His perfect righteousness that can take away every trace of sin and put it out of sight forever. Let those holes, while we look at them and repent over them, spur us forward for the future, but let us not drive the nails in again, let us not crucify the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame. Beloved, let next year's record, through the Grace

of the Holy Spirit, be of a higher and nobler kind than that of any year we have ever lived! Rise, you who have but skimmed the surface of the sea of life, and with eagle wings mount upwards towards the sun! Up there is the true atmosphere for a child of God to breathe! Rise, you who, like the owl and the bat, have dwelt in darkness, and ask of your Lord the eagle eye that can face the sun, for the Christian's dwelling place is in the light! You who have crouched down, like a strong mule between two burdens, rise and speed onward like a war-horse prepared to carry his master into the thick of the fight! "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem! Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!"

So Beloved, let next year see how God can glorify Himself in the hearts of feeble men and women. This, then, is the message for us Christians—let us turn over a new leaf.

But what about those who are not believers in Jesus? We may say to them that they, also, have been guilty concerning Christ, so, even before the New Year comes, *they, also, should turn over a new leaf,* only, in their case, there is needed a new book altogether, for if they merely turn over a new leaf in the old book, it will be quite as blotted as the past leaves have been! O Lord, give them a new book and take away the old one! And then they will be able to turn over a new leaf, indeed! It is no use trying to get your old stony heart patched up and repaired—you must have a new one altogether! May the Lord give you a new heart and a right spirit with which to begin the New Year so soon to dawn!

Further, to those who have been guilty concerning Christ, but who have not repented and trusted Him, and who have not been led to tremble with regard to their condition before Him, let us tell them how terrible is their danger, and how great will be their ruin before long. *This next year some of you will die.* I am not speaking at haphazard of such a vast congregation as this, for out of the six or seven thousand persons present it is absolutely *certain* that within 12 months many will die! I suppose, not less than a hundred. By the natural laws which limit the duration of a generation, in this next year many of us must die. Well, then, if you are not converted. If you have no Savior, it follows as a matter of certainty that within the next year some of you will be in Hell. This is not a matter of question or of chance, but if you do not, by faith, look to the Lord Jesus Christ and lay hold on Him, it is absolutely certain that, before another 12 months shall have gone, and another last Sabbath-night in the year shall have come, you will be in Hell—with no possibility of escape, shut out forever from the mercy of God, shut in forever with the devil and his angels—and weeping bitter tears which cannot quench the eternal flames of God's just vengeance against sin.

May the Lord sanctify to you these solemn meditations and give you Grace to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, that you may be saved! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 2.

Verse 1. *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.*—Probably from that Assyria which is joined with Israel and Egypt in the remarkable prophecy in Isaiah 19:24, 25—"In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, My people, and Assyria, the work of My hands, and Israel, My inheritance. "Behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem."—

2-3. *Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.* He was troubled about the kingship which he had no right to possess, for he thought that, if the "King of the Jews" was really coming, he would be dethroned. And all Jerusalem was troubled with him, for the people over whom he reigned never knew what mischief he might do when once his suspicions were excited, for he was a cruel, blood-thirsty tyrant.

4-6. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said to him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the Prophet, And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judaea, are not the least among the princes of Judaea: for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel.* It was something to get a distinct declaration from the Jewish rulers that the Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, for Jesus was born there! Afterwards, they called Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Nazareth was the place where He was brought up, but Bethlehem was the place of His birth, in fulfillment of the prophecy given hundreds of years before the event!

7, 8. *Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also.* Pretty "worship" was that which he would render to the Infant King! He intended to *murder* Him and, in like manner, how often, under the pretense of worshipping Christ, has the very Truth of Christ been murdered! Men invent new sacraments, new doctrines, new forms and ceremonies, all avowedly for the edification of the Church and for the glory of Jesus—but really that they may stab at the very heart of God's Gospel and put to death the living Truth of God.

9. *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.* Yet it was not a wandering star, nor a shooting star; but a traveling star such as they had never seen before!

10-12. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.* Very Providentially, the magi had brought the gold with which Joseph would be able to pay the expenses incurred in journeying to the

land of Egypt, and in supporting his family there till he could return to his home and his business. God always takes care of His own children and specially did He provide for His first-born and only-begotten Son!

13, 14. *And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, and be you there until I bring you word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him. When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt.* How obedient Joseph was! He was a man of a docile spirit, who willingly did as God bade him. He has, perhaps, never had his character sufficiently well set forth in the Church of God, for he was eminently honored by being the guardian of the young Child and His mother. And he discharged his duty with singular humility and gentleness.

15. *And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son.* Which was true, first, of Israel, the *nation*, as God's own, and now again true of Jesus, the great Son of God. It is also true of all sons of God—we have to be called out of Egypt. By the blood of the Paschal Lamb we, too, are saved, and we are brought out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm in the day when God delivers us from our sin.

16. *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceedingly angry, and sent out and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.* That was the light *he* put upon it, "that he was mocked of the wise men." He was exceedingly angry and when he was angry, his anger was terrible. Augustus said of him that it would be better to be Herod's sow than Herod's son, which was true, for he would not kill a sow, as he held to the Jewish faith. He did not kill swine, but he would not mind killing any human in his anger. "He was exceedingly angry, and sent out and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men." He took a wide range in order, so he thought, to make quite sure that he would kill the Child King whom he especially hated.

17, 18. *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the Prophet, Saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.* It must have been a very sorrowful day in Bethlehem. You can imagine the grief that filled the hearts of the mothers there. There is Herod, who acts the hypocrite and tries to slay Christ at the first. And there is Judas at the end, acting the hypocrite, too, and betrays his Lord. Thus is the life of Christ begun and ended in sorrow.

19-22. *But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother and came into the land of Israel. But when He heard*

that Archelaus reigned in Judaea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Archelaus was another chip off the old block, and a chip of very hard wood, too—equally cruel, but without his father's greatness of mind. He had all Herod's vices without his mental vigor.

22. *Notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.* He did not follow his own judgment. This man, thoroughly a servant of God, waits for orders. He has his fears, but he will not even act upon them. He waits till he is warned of God in a dream and then he turns aside into the parts of Galilee.

23. *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.* Galilee was despised, but Nazareth was thought to be the worst part of Galilee! Netzar is a word in the Hebrew signifying a sprout or branch and Nazareth apparently comes from the same root.

23. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.* This is the name commonly given to our Lord in the Old Testament. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesus was the sprout, or the shoot out of the withered stem of Jesse. When the dynasty of David was like the tree cut down and only the stem of it left, there sprang up out of it the Netzar, the Nazarene. So He is found dwelling in a city that is called by that name and He is also called a Nazarene. And the name clings to Him to this day! There are those who will call Him by no name but, "the Nazarene." There was one who threatened to crush the Nazarene, but when he was dying, he had to cry, "O Nazarene, You have triumphed!" And the Nazarene will always do so. He shall be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—249, 257, 279.

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

END OF VOLUME 42.